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# Collusion

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NEW YORK PUERTO RICAN GROUP ESG SMILE FOR THE FIRST ISSUE OF COLLUSION

GINA FRANKLYN

I'm gonna tell you a little story 'bout the Sugarhill Gang  
With a pow pow boogie and a big bang bang  
An' if you wanna rap to the Sugar Hill beat,  
Gotta rap in the key of R-A-P



\*



\*

OFF  
- THE \* KEY



We've got cold voices and hearts of steel  
Because with five MCs  
We've got to be real

It's two summers since the Sugarhill Gang vibrated the public ear with their 'Rapper's Delight', and one since Kurtis Blow established the protracted rap backtrack format with his album titletrack, 'The Breaks'. In that short time rapping has been integrated into white rock musicians' repertoires and is on the verge of mass popularity. Musicians are dredging the net across this fertile pool and soon the public record collection will swell its disco section from one (Chic's Greatest Hits) to two with Sugarhill's 'The Greatest Rap Hits'.

Already the documentors are at work; with the authentic auto-rap, 'Rappin' about Rappin' by Junie Morrison and in England, home of the novelty record, the Evasions' irritatingly, know-all 'The Wikka Wrap' (Groove) does a rapxplanation of funk, just like Pete and Dud helped us understand soul via their analysis of James Brown's 'Papa's gotta Brand New Bag'.

My Rap Road to Damascus led me through a '30s ballroom in downtown New York in March this year. The Ritz was the dance venue of the moment, and playing host to the rap label, Sugarhill Records for a Rappers' Party. This dazzling event brought a coachload of nouveau-famous and very young stars from their New Jersey and Bronx rappin' grounds, to greetings by an enthusiastic crowd of whites 'in-the-know' and blacks who'd drifted downtown after being knocked out at the Apollo Theatre's Rappers' Convention a month earlier. The evening's success signalled that Rap had arrived, accepted by a white crowd on their home territory.



MAY 1957

Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers

In the two years since Sugarhill Records was launched by Sylvia Robinson in Englewood, New Jersey, it has shifted attention away from the pioneer rap label, Enjoy, run by Bobby Robinson from his famous Harlem record store.

This switch has interesting historical ironies—which may or may not amuse Bobby R. The two Robinsons (no relation) are no strangers to each other. In the early '50s, when every street corner in Harlem sported a male vocal harmony group (with a very few women) Bobby Robinson, a local musician forsook music for more general entrepreneurial duties, set up a record shop and launched the first of many labels—Red Robin, Whirlin Disc, Fury, Enjoy—featuring neighbourhood teenage R&B groups.

One particular part of North Harlem produced more talent than the rest—a family area known as the Sugar Hill in Washington Heights. Battles of the groups were regulation while further afield contests were recorded in the Jewish Centre in Englewood, New Jersey (now Sugarhill Records' base town). One famous product of these contests was 13-year-old Frankie Lymon whose pure falsetto thrilled hearts worldwide as lead for The Teenagers plea 'I'm Not a Juvenile Delinquent'.

1981's crop of fresh-faced teenagers who battled wits and vocal chords in Bronx/New Jersey parks and discos while Rap was still underground, show direct ties to these '50s groups, now old enough to be their parents. Back in those days, Mickey 'Guitar' Baker, one of the most talented session players, used to back many of Bobby Robinson's discoveries. His pairing with a sweet-singing teenager called Sylvia Van Der Pool (now Robinson) led to Mickey and Sylvia hits like 'Love is Strange'.



Sylvia, like Bobby, eventually turned from performing to producing and launched her All-Platinum label in the early '70s, superceded in 1979 by Sugarhill. They released their first rap record that year—The Sugarhill Gang's Rapper Delight.

Although Bobby Robinson's Enjoy label has some hit rap releases, Sylvia Robinson is now the undisputed *grande-dame-de-rap*.

It should be obvious by now that Rap is New York. Rap is also Black. Predictably, it reached the mass of white ears through the Blondie-white voice of 'Rapture', an unconvincing hook-together of icy-cool downtown verses. Since then, in England, we have had the amusing 'Barnsley Rap'—so far from the Bronx as to get away with it—with fullblown Dales accents and pride-of-Yorkshire lyrics, and authentic Kurtis Blow rip-off backing track. This is a rap trademark: the @ is ignored as pieces of other people's tunes are sown together for the rhythms.

The verbals in rapping lie on a direct line with the cruelly parodied attempts at enforced imitation of da massa's tongue, with dis-ses and dat-s, through the jazz beat, bebop vocalising, scat-talking which gave up on words altogether and drew meaning out of scattered fragments and sounds and EMOTION; today's jive-talking, private language of black musicians, playing around with the rhythms of words.

Black American enforced-English has been through far more changes than its colonisers' tongue; this difference in language is as important and significant as the private codes of dress style, dance steps, greeting signs, etc. which reinforce and preserve a separate identity, define and describe a culture within a culture, and simply shout Black is Different. Similarly young Jamaicans in England (aside from the rasta-trappings)—look at the developed style of the West Indian-London schoolgirls, pleated skirts, socks and shoes and elaborate African hairstyles variations. Since James Brown first preached pride in Blackness the Rappers take that as their base line, and promote Black is Best to Be!

In spite of the 'latest fad' tag, rapping isn't a new-from-nowhere musical form—nothing ever is, of course. Listen to any fast-talking street wise black New York kid, forget about trying to understand the words, listen to their rhythms, the jerks, the bends, words broken along lines which an English poetry teacher couldn't possibly imagine—these contain their own music, and are ready-made for putting to a backbeat, which is exactly what rapping does.

The main gist of the lyrics is a fast high of self-adverts right down to vital statistics, sexual boasts and heavy i.d. information (usually big on astrology).



Rapping knuckles back in the '60s: JOE TEX

by SUE STEWARD



We're just three Rappers  
Who want to be known  
As professional magicians  
Of the microphone

The Sugarhill Gang

Three distinct vocal arrangements begin to emerge after close listening to a selection of Rap groups. The Furious 5 tend to put their strength into unisons and solos, while the Sugarhill Gang—the traditionalists—project three distinct channels of vocal harmony. Funky 4's eager but very precise sequential system means that the person on the mike completes the person before's phrase—making a very fast, but non-overlapping string of rhythms, threaded with the five different voices.

But Rap isn't just fast-talking. Behind it is the music: slow and heavy dance tracks, extended into long instrumentals—a trick gained from James Brown with his instrumental B-side to keep the dancing and excitement going; the music is often formalised, always decorated with a delicate rhythm guitar, often its rhythms charged, complicated by Latin instruments which fill the breaks. Sometimes, as with the Sugarhill Gang, provided by a live band.

Rappin' takes disco leaps ahead: a disco d.j. introduces a number, sometimes chats, plays around with the control board and alters bass and treble, even possibly remixes the music. Between tracks, the d.j. chats to the audience, sometimes leaking over the beginning or end of a record. Put on an instrumental, chat over it and the d.j. has taken over the function of the singer/performer. Multiply by four, all bursting with their own tale to tell, take turns at the mike . . . the intro is also the outro, there is no point to the song because the rap is the point. Funky Four plus One in an NME interview explained this as their route; suddenly there are 5 m.c.s or d.j.s chasing each other for microphone and air space and you have to tighten it up, control the order, pre-plan the chat. Then you've got a rap band.

Precision timing—choreography—is essential; bodies and voices must glide smoothly amongst each other. The Funky Four plus One say that the early rap contests revolved around dancing battles called Breaking Contests, held in the neighbourhood parks; battles between sound systems, acrobatic dance routines, m.c.'ed by kids who devised rapping commentators for the contests. Eventually these commentators teamed together to form the best-known rap bands of today.

Rapping does have a female element—Funky Four's Sha-Rock was the first girl rapper only because she was there from the start but Sequence is the only all-girl rap group. Three women decked in stretch be-sequined bodysuits with fur trims, give very detailed personal run-downs, with incongruous details like Blondie's vital statistics next to the fact of her being a qualified nurse. Less of the sexual prowess stuff than on some of the male groups.

The first known rappers, the Sugarhill Gang, are a 3-piece male vocal group, paced against a live backing band. Their vocalising, unlike some of the recent rappers, shows heavy soul and even gospel roots. Master Gee, Wonder Mike and Big Bank Hank, only 18, 23, 23, already look like the grand ole men of the game. Their traditional elegant style: lightweight suits, casual expensive shoes, combined with straight-line formation routines, involving elaborate, precise hand-movements put them closer to the Inkspots/Four Tops/Stylistics line than the effervescent disco-derived gymnastic antics of their stable mates like Funky Four and The Furious Five. In the live show, their lyrical obsession with NY pride and urgent call-and-response games with the audience were jarring and not very popular.

Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five take rap further out from the Motown traditions. Their show at the Ritz was the undoubted highspot. From the moment they leapt on stage, glitzy reflections, black capes removed to reveal black and silver disco jumpsuits, and pumps, they showered us with non-stop bragging, while the Grandmaster hopped around his decks at the side of the stage or jumped across to a rapping mike.

Flash is undoubtedly the wizzard of the turntables. His intruments: two decks, identical or different records, minimal control switches—and two athletic thumbs. With this equipment, he treats the beat for the rappers' doetailed conversations at stage front, mixing the sound as it plays, twiddling, interfering—listen to his trickersations on his 'Adventures of GMF on the 'Wheels of Steel', Sugarhill 12" single. He manipulates the decks, flicking backwards and forwards, spinning one record against the other, stopping them mid-track, to repeat whole phrases or exaggerate the beat, then as they're released they yelp into the original melody. But he never interferes with the basic rhythm which is kept firmly intact.

The spoken word has long held a valued place in black music—central to gospel from which came soul, spoken blues and praise songs, and more recent developments from the West Indian poets: Prince Far-I's reverberative intonations, Linton Kwesi Johnson's hypnotically metered indictments of Babylon which he inhabits; poets and d.j.s, m.c.s and rappers, boasters and toasters . . . .



I was sitting in my house watchin' my tv  
When all of a sudden it dawns on me  
That I was all alone, just a-wasting my time  
So I found a pen and paper and wrote down the rhyme.  
And I thought to myself how nice it would be  
To be on top making cash monee  
To go on tour around the world  
To tell the latest story to all the fly girls  
To sit on my throne  
To command my own  
To be number one on the microphone  
Just telling my tale about how it was gonna be  
For the Funky Four plus One MC



# Music &

## Music and Film

By SIMON FRITH

There's a moment in *The Harder They Come* when Jimmy Cliff and his fellow rude boys sit through a spaghetti western, enthralled by its images of retribution. Other people in this Kingston crowd are concentrating on the soundtrack—Ennio Morricone is the line that runs from Puccini to dub.

Morricone's music is familiar even to rock fans these days, but Morricone himself remains (in Britain at least) an unknown figure. On the sleeve of the Italian anthology of his greatest titles, *Un Film, Una Musica*, he is photoed in a dark shirt and black-rimmed glasses, a pensive intellectual. And his career certainly hasn't been limited to westerns. Morricone was conservatory trained: he is a composer and orchestrator with an obviously 'serious' facility—his scores for *1900* and *The Battle of Algiers*, for example. He is also a trumpeter and, more unusually, an improviser; and he performs regularly in Rome.

Improvisation and film scoring would seem to be opposite ways of making music: film music is programme music, determined by the extra-musical events on which it comments; improvised music is music of the moment, determined only by its immediate conditions of production. In some ways, though, film scorers, like improvisers, are freed from compositional norms: they can leave it to the pictures to make sense of the sounds. And all sounds ('musical' or not) tell a story. Soundtrack composers, indeed, think harder than anyone else about the non-musical meanings of music—consider the amount of thought that goes into the brief sounds that accompany TV commercials.

'Background music' is a term of critical abuse, but all popular music works as background—background to stars and lyrics which give songs their specific meaning; even popular instrumental music is defined by its function in dance. The idea that music should be 'only music', something to sit and listen to, is a bourgeois idea which reflects the peculiar conditions of classical music. And, in practice, even such 'serious' music is heard as a soundtrack: descriptions

of classical pieces routinely refer to the visual images they invoke. The assumption is that such networks of aural/visual association are emotionally fixed—it is taken for granted that this noise conveys the sea, this the moonlight, this a battle, and so on. Nineteenth century grand opera was predicated on such connections, as Hans Eisler points out:

'If a dog is mentioned, then the orchestra barks, if a bird then an orchestra cheeps, if death is mentioned then the gentlemen of the trombones have to exert themselves, if it is love then there are the divided high violins in E major, and at the triumph the trusty percussion also joins in. It is unbearable!'

Sound films, rather than for the first time subordinating sounds to pictures, in fact liberated European music from bourgeois sentimentality. In Eisler's 1935 words:

'Sound film is making the masses unaccustomed to seeing pictures of real life while they hear music. So a more realistic type of listener is arising in contrast to the old idealistic concert-goer.'

These days, most of our assumptions about sound and vision are derived from our experience of film: the private images we run through our heads when we hear music are determined by the soundtrack codes we've learnt from hundreds of public viewings. Rock music has contributed little to these codes ('youth oriented' film scores are, by definition, made up of familiar, autonomous hits) because until recently Afro-American musical principles were difficult to follow in film scores: black music is physical, intense, spontaneous and vocal; it registers in films as interference. Thus 1950s 'jazz' soundtracks (by people like Andre Previn and Quincy Jones) were, in practice, the usual European compositions but with jazz instrumentation (John Barry used rock instruments similarly in the 1960s). It took disco, with its abstraction and its plastic studio effects, to establish black sounds in films and commercials. Indeed, the disco genre itself emerged from the pioneering film work of soul writers



# Music

like Isaac Hayes (*Shaft*), Curtis Mayfield (*Superfly*) and J. J. Johnson (*Across 110th Street*).

Even disco tracks are confined in their references, though, and the conventional Hollywood film score, even after thirty years of rock and roll and popular black music, remains the romantic symphony, as translated into film segments by 1930s composers like Max Steiner. Films are still

edited according to temporal/harmonic rules; they follow the development of a plot/theme through various dramatic and emotional movements; they bring together a limited number of identifiable characters/melodies whose relationships pose problems/dissonances which are resolved in a happy, harmonic ending.

The paradox of movie music (and the reason for its loss of status since the 1930s as a 'serious' form of composition) is that its romanticism —

conventionally the expression of the composer's own subjectivity—is, in fact, an objective exercise. The film scorer's task is to express the film's emotions (not his or her own), and the technical rules of this exercise were so quickly learnt that film companies soon divided their musical labour, employing specialists in love, action, comedy and so on. The vast majority of film scores (John Williams' for example) are so functional that they have no interest outside the cinema. Every picture is needed to tell the story and there is no gap left between sound and vision at all.

Hollywood music doesn't have to be so dull. Its 'fakeness' is also the source of its interest and the best Hollywood composer since the war, Bernard Herrmann (whose career stretched from *Citizen Kane* (1941) to *Taxi Driver* (1976), taking in much of Hitchcock along the way) was an intellectual whose pleasure lay in the games he could play with genre conventions. Rather than leitmotifs (the Hollywood means of character reference), Herrmann used repeated riffs: his films' cross references, their plot points, were made with rhythmic rather than harmonic relationships. Listen, for example, to the way the string-only orchestra in *Psycho* (1960) makes music that is neurotically unfulfilled. And for Herrmann (who was inspired by Charles Ives and Béla Bartók) any sound could contribute to a rhythm (harmonic rules were suspended). Herrmann scores feature unusual instruments (four electric organs and a cathedral organ in *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth* (1959); massed tubas in *Jason and the Argonauts*,

(1963)) everyday sounds (birdsong in *Psycho*); and anything percussive in all his films. Herrmann took particular delight in making familiar noises strange.

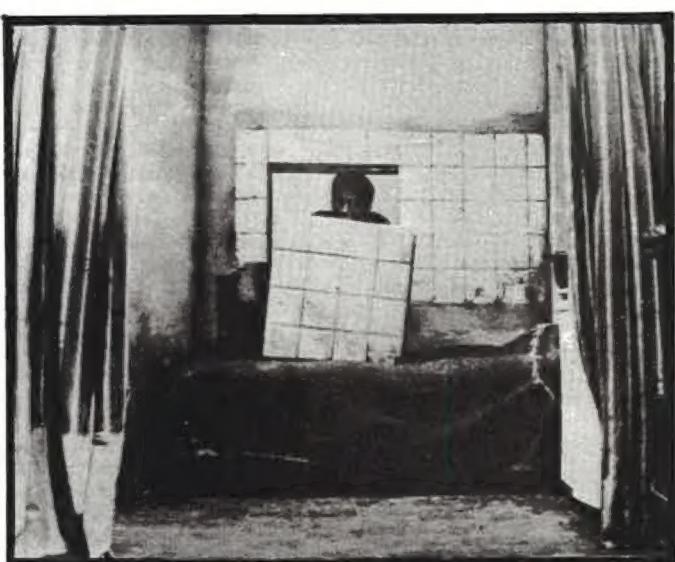
Bernard Herrmann took it for granted that the cinema audience was familiar enough with movie music to enjoy having its expectations confounded. In *Obsession* (1976), for example, the references to Verdi's *Requiem* point up the sweet sickliness of religious fever, and the waltz is a rhythm of despair, a swirling urge to death. Herrmann exploits the artificiality of film romanticism and he was not, surprisingly, always fascinated with electronic sounds—*The Day The Earth Stood Still* (1951) used an orchestra supplemented with two theramins and an electronic bass/violin/guitars.

In Hitchcock's films self-expression is self-deception, and the point of Herrmann's music is to whip away the stable meaning of symphonic sounds, to plant doubts about the symphonic form. Ennio Morricone's western scores comment similarly on the music itself, but Morricone went much further than Herrmann in his (post rock and roll) use of a beat, electronics, the recording studio. Sergio Leone's films stripped the Western of its personality—he was interested in archetypes, strangers living out their destinies in one of the inner circles of hell—and Morricone's task was to match musically such objectivity.

The resulting music uses conventional western elements—twangy, harmonica guitar, trumpets from both Mexican and US Cavalry bands, big country strings (as used by Dvorak), a melancholy chorale of the women left at home—but Morricone changes their context. Like Herrmann, he creates rhythmic textures, but his timing is more subtly unsettling. His favourite instrument is the electric piano, and while his western instruments are marking out a slurred,



SACCO & VANZETTI: street protest at U.S.A. injustice in famous trial. For the movie the score was written by Ennio Morricone with words by Joan Baez.



Battle of Algiers: celluloid version. Music by Morricone.

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Bernard Herrmann

passive beat, his keyboards are rhythmically, anxiously, punctual. Morricone's percussive effects seem thus to be improvised against a tape loop—the beat recurs, but against a random series of other sounds; the resulting tensions can never be resolved (just as Leone's men with no names can never settle with their human condition). The most dramatic Morricone score in this respect is *Il Gatto A Nove Code* (1971) in which there is no pretence even at melodic phrasing; every instrument, voice and trumpet included, is concerned only with its own time, and the music is so intellectually absorbing that it is impossible to make any emotional assumptions about what the accompanying pictures might be.

Morricone's grandest score, *Once Upon A Time In The West* (1969), was composed before the film's shooting script; the film was cut to

the pulse of the music. The score is a showcase for Morricone's usual gifts: his mastery of a range of sounds, from oboe and cello to xylophone and electric bass; his ability to play off orchestral against electronic arrangements; his ease with western codes (the harmonica, the country bar band) but what makes a Morricone score so distinctive is harder to describe—it concerns his musical sense of space and calm.

It is a paradox of film music that in a situation where music has apparently little to do (it just has to accompany the visual) it actually does so much. Film composers are not noted for their restraint and scores tend to be packed with information. Bernard Herrmann was, in this respect, a typical Hollywood composer: his music is busy, rich, melodramatic and deliberately excessive in its pursuit of effects—Herrmann never used one bass drum

when he could use eight. Morricone's music is, by contrast, remarkably disciplined: his riffs are minimal (usually a three- or four-note syncopation); his textures, whatever their range of sounds, are sparse (often resting on a simple high/low or staccato/legato effect); he is as aware as any dub producer of the silences between the beats. Morricone's western scores, composed for violent action, are, indeed, remarkably static: they don't narrate, they don't solve problems; they don't offer catharsis—their appeal, like that of the films themselves, is as much intellectual as emotional.

In one of Morricone's non-western titles, *La Classe Operaia In Paradiso* (1971) he moves abruptly from factory floor rock to pastiche Puccini to the cabaret sound (trumpet and piano) of a Brecht/Weill musical. It was Brecht's argument (taken from Eisler) that the use of music in film as an emotional power, an 'enveloping' effect (Herrmann's description) is reactionary. Progressive artists in film had to use sound and vision to argue against each other. In Eisler's words:

'a new way of using vocal and instrumental music is above all to set the music against the action in the film. That means that the music is not employed to "illustrate" the film, but to explain and comment on it.'

Morricone's music is, by this criterion, exemplary. His western scores draw attention to the glib sentimentality of the western myth, to its shallow, ahistorical treatment of violence. But Morricone's music meets another Brecht criterion too: it is not just clever, it is also popular and funny. There is, unfortunately, not much other music like it.



TOP: Hanns Eisler leaves Bond Street Police Court 1949.

ABOVE: Eisler portrayed in American cartoon, 1947.



ENNIO MORRICONE

Photo: Roberto Masotti

# A GOZÁ

## The Cuban Roots of Salsa

By Nestor Figueras



D. Toop

On the seacoasts of an island somewhere, some sugarcane cutters retained their pride, retrieved their rhythms, and remembered the colour of their ancestors. The fathers told their sons and these sons became story-tellers, or for lack of a better word, musicians, dedicated to teaching the history of their people through songs.

Felipe Luciano, sleeve notes 'Latin Roots', Cariño Records, 1974.

### The Roots of Salsa

Ehhhhh Pa' goza  
Aro aro macaguá  
Faniá  
Aro Aro macaguá  
Eh Eh  
Aro Aro macaguá  
Faniá  
Berequetes mangiaco

Ese Africa a mi crocó  
Ese Africa a mi crocó  
Faniá  
Ese Africa a mi crocó

(montuno)

Fania funché  
Fania funché  
Fania funché  
Fania funché  
Fania funché  
Fania funché  
Fania funché

(etc.)

FANIA by Reinaldo Bolanos.

This son by Cuban Reinaldo Bolanos has a special place in the history of Salsa. In 1963 the leading flute player, Johnny Pacheco took its title for the name of the record label which he set up with Italian-Jewish lawyer Jerry Masucci—an historic union which kicked off an explosion never before seen in Latin music. Apart from this actual immortalization, the son nicely demonstrates the black elements essential to the soul of Afro-Cuban music.

To a greater extent than the other Caribbean islands, Cuba has guarded and even strengthened the African elements in its music—for very definite historic reasons. The slave trade into Cuba continued almost into the 20th century: records show slaves arriving as late as 1880 (the first shipment arrived in the early 16th century). As in Brasil the last slaves to arrive were mainly Yorubans (from Nigeria and Dahomey) whose traditions and beliefs have been kept fairly intact to the present day.

During the early days of colonialism, the Catholic Church fostered the creation of a syncretist cult called Santeria—the cult of the Saints—from the slaves' African religions. In Santeria, the Catholic saints replaced the African deities externally, but did not oust their central concept of beliefs. The creation of religious 'fraternities' intensified the cult, as well as being associations of mutual assistance which kept together, when possible, members of the same African tribe. This helped to conserve old traditions. It is interesting to note that some Santeros (adherents to the cult of Santeria) in Cuba and latterly New York, still understand Yoruba—now known as Lucumi—which is spoken not only in rituals and chants, but sometimes in daily life as well.

In colonial Cuba, as in Spain, feasts and processions were organized on religious Holy Days, especially that of the Epiphany. As the fraternities were allowed to participate, it was then that the slaves were allowed to 'manifest' themselves in the way they knew how: with drums, chants, masks and costumes. What was to become a great cultural blend—Carnival—took off.

Each fraternity had its own particular sound, according to its origins and language. In Cuba, each Oricha (saint in the Yoruba language)—had a rhythm created exclusively in its honour. Many Oricha still have African names: (Saint) Elegua had a rhythm called *lulu banche*; Ochosi had two rhythms: *agguere* and *oba-like*; Bababalu Aye had *iya-nkota*; while Changó had *kan-kan*, *egbui-kja-mi*; *meta-meta tui-tui bayuba*, *di-taro* and others.

Very likely the officially organized processions and feasts, when finished, had a more popular—ie. less religious—counterpart, where family or fraternity had its own *rumba* binge (nb. the *rumba* is not just a dance, it is also an 'atmosphere').

The Lucumi liturgies with music consist of a series of hymns—*oru*—dedicated to the various gods/saints. There are three *oru* in the Lucumi ritual: one for solo voices, one for solo sacred *bata* drums, and one for voices, drums and dancers. The three kinds of *bata* drums: *iya*, *Itotele* and *Okonkolo*, demonstrate the Afro-Cuban polyrhythms at their best.

In the solos for voices and *bata*, the rhythms are basically the same, differing only in that one is oral and the words have an idiomatic value, while the other is exclusively percussive. The sacred drums are the only ones to speak directly to the gods.

The *oru* of the *bata* is most complex, played on three of these double-headed drums—six hands playing: a *toque* or call is played to each oricha/saint, except Elegua and babalu aye, who get two. Some *toques* have successive rhythms and the transition from one to another is

called *viro* or *vuelta* (turn)—some have as many as six turns.

In addition to the *toques*, there are the *llames*, conversations, or short calls, of which there are two kinds. The initial *llames* calls the attention of the other two drums, and is always played by *iya* drum at the beginning of the main call. In this way it establishes the rhythm to be played. The second call is made between the rhythms already being played, to which the *Itotele* or second drum rhythms respond immediately either continuing the rhythm or starting a conversation.

Conversations are phrases played by *iya* drums between two rhythms of a call or at the interruption of one rhythm when it starts again at the end of a conversation. The conversation or *tongue* played by the *iya* drum tries to reproduce musically certain Yoruba voices. This linguistic base gives it a distinct peculiarity, in contrast to the main 'calls' which are repeated over and over.

Thus, what would otherwise be a very rigid, hermetic system is very free—as in jazz, where each instrument has a moment to come to the foreground and then join back in again, with the liberty to choose which 'phrase' to use, and when.



D. Toop



iDescargas! Cachao y su Ritmo Caliente

### The development of the Cuban Sound

The development of Cuba followed, more or less, the same pattern of its colonizer, Spain. As soon as the industries of tobacco and sugar-rum were well established by the late 16th century, with Havana the centrepiece between Spain and its colonies, the syndrome of centralized government-culture-production paved the way to a new 'elite', whose only ambition was to be equal to Europe, its only reference to a 'civilized' world. And this meant, of course, cheap, easy-to-get labour, creating thus a society within a society, a rural-urban transculturalization: the shanty town belts of South America, Ranchos of Caracas, Favelas of Rio de Janeiro, now pathetically famous because of Carnival.

It is in this sub-culture that old sounds met new, and the marriage of neo-African rhythms with white-Spanish counterparts gave birth to what was to become the 'Cuban sound'.

As the Colony grew, so did the musical forms: Yambu, Guaguancó, Son, Guaracha, etc., becoming more independent but maintaining a common link in the neo-African polyrhythms.

Cuban popular music developed two distinct features, which influenced each other. In 'Black Music of Two Worlds', John Storm Roberts says on this point that in modern terms one might say 'the first was represented by the Mambo, and the second by the Cha-Cha-Cha.' Both Mambo and Cha-Cha-Cha use guitars. Two modes that settled in very quickly, possibly the grand-parents of Salsa, were the Guaguancó and the Son. The Guaguancó's major feature is its vocal form—a long narrative passage with a topical subject. In

most Latin bands the singer sticks to one form of singing, but he/she is expected to sing anything at any time.

The Son is probably the most popular form. It is the basic form from which many bands developed their own styles, but it is also permeable and able to absorb any changes. The main structure of the son used in Salsa consists of the following parts: Initial theme; Son; Montuno; final theme.

The parts are held together by the Clave, basic rhythm pattern played on the claves, wooden sticks. As with the bata drums, these forms are woven to give the musician the opportunity to be 'flowery' or to show off, in between sections, as long as the basic pattern or clave is respected.

After the initial theme, the Son (generally the singer's part, introducing the main theme) jumps to the Montuno, call-and-response, between the parts. Linking the two is the Mambo section, equivalent to the llame played on the bata. The variations within this system are endless, but for it to be Salsa two things must be present: it has to have a Mambo section, and it must be 'in clave'.

John Storm Roberts again: 'Although the strong black elements, it's not clear whether the Son came from the black use of Spanish elements, or a more general music with strong black contents. It originated from the earlier Spanish musical form, the estribillo, which was accompanied by guitar and a small, three-stringed guitar called a tres and at times the marimbula—a descendant of the African marimba or hand piano, and the botija, a jug blown into to give a bass note.' JSR adds that 'the presence of these instruments, and the early use of guitar, for there is evidence that black Cubans took to the guitar very

early, given the fact that it is fundamental to Spanish music, suggests a black origin for the Son.'

By the beginning of the 1800s, the new elite who considered themselves Cuban, began to feel uneasy about the monopoly of Spain over the prosperous and profitable industries, and a series of rebellions and cries for independence swept Cuba and the rest of the New World.

In 1895 Jose Martí and his Partido Revolucionario Cubano, led the last and successful revolt against Spain in a war that lasted four years. As victory got near, the US intervened and declared war against Spain. Spain was defeated and the Treaty of Paris was signed, putting an end to Spanish rule over Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Phillipines. Cuba proclaimed and elaborated its own constitution to which the Americans added the Platt Amendment which gave the US the right to intervene in Cuban affairs. Thus, the last marriage of the Cuban sound came to be. By this time, Cuban popular music was well established, rooted, and taken for granted; even classical pieces with popular themes were in vogue. What came out of this marriage was both interesting and fruitful—a mutually influenced music, of which John Storm Roberts gives an immaculate account in his book *The Latin Tinge*.

That Cuban music was very evident both inside and outside the Caribbean at the beginning of this century is unquestionable. Both Cuban and American musicians commuted between their countries, leaving what are now legendary stories and anecdotes. For Cubans, Jazz was the new revelation. Cuban Descargas (jam sessions) were a must in the US. The flirt with bebop was a turning point for Cuban music. Both fed each other.

### The Palladium's Hey Day

By the late 1930s, New York had a fairly large Latin community that demanded and justified the presence of Latin musicians—Broadway and Hollywood had gone through and over their Latin rage, and Carmen Miranda with her high heels and fruity hats was a household name. In the mid-40s, with the war over, the US was on a sort of flat note—although Latin music—at least a version of it—was still part of big-band repertoire. But in 1947 things were to change radically. The Palladium, a huge hall capable of housing 1,000 couples, was on its way down. The white audience who frequented it grew less and less. Perhaps the fox-trot, the tango and the swing had served their wartime purpose and lost interest. Or had R'n'B and rock begun to be felt? Anyway, one Mr. Moore, manager of the Palladium, found himself faced with the problem of bringing dancing crowds back to the hall. He contacted Frederico Pagani, a promoter of Caribbean music, who had been around ever since Desi Arnaz, and leader of his own band, *Conjunto Ritmo*. Moore somehow hinted that the solution might be in the Latinos.

Meanwhile, an Orquestra of black Latinas had broken through in Broadway to the white audience; this was *Machito and his Afro-Cubans*. Moore talked to Pagani and Mario Bauza, musical director of Machito's Band, who had been responsible for the first attempts to blend Cuban music and jazz. They agreed on a Latin music alternative for the hall—and the 'Blem Blem Club' was born (the name came from a composition by Chano Pozo, percussionist with Dizzy Gillespie, who some claim revolutionized the rhythmic concepts of bebop).

The Blem Blem Club started with Sunday matinees, and proved so successful that it was extended to Wednesday evenings. Before the end of a year, the Palladium provided exclusively Afro-Cuban music. As the dances became more and more popular, the need for more bands and variety grew. The first band or group to play alongside Machito and his Afro-Cubans, was the *Picadilly Boys*, led by a young graduate from the Juilliard School, Tito Puente.

Very quickly the Palladium became the centre of Latin music, and the audience wanted more and better music. Puente soon changed his group to *Tito Puente and His Orquestra*, followed by *Tito Rodriguez and his Orquestra*, and dozens of others who made the 50s the decade of Latin music.

Parallel to the Big Band craze, a series of bands followed the more *tipico*—typical down home sound of the Cuban 'Orquestra Aragon'. These bands, characterized by their soft, down sounds of violins, flutes and voices, were derived from the 'Orquestras Francescas' of the French colonial era. *Johnny Pacheco y su Charanga*, and *Charlie Palmieri's Orquestra Duboney* were the pioneer Charanga bands in New York.



The Charanga had a short and important reign in the later part of the 50s, especially after 1958 when *José Fajardo y sus Estrellas* played in NY. Fajardo had been asked to play at the Hotel Waldorf Astoria by the Democratic Party who were strongly pushing the candidature of John F Kennedy. The plan was that the savoury sound of exotic flutes and violins would be a good attraction, but as it turned out, Fajardo caused more commotion within the Latin community than the Democrats, and soon a gig at the Palladium was arranged. Fajardo's sound had nothing to do with the Jazz Band's—it hit the whole musical scene and community like lightning, and things were never the same again.

#### Back Home in Cuba, things were stirring; in New York, Rock and Roll .

In 1959 yet another change in Cuba, as Fidel Castro and his rebels entered Havana. Shortly afterwards, the US reverted to their role as 'Guardians of the Caribbean', by launching the aborted invasion of the Bay of Pigs, and a political blockade was imposed, completely isolating the island. An exodus followed. New York was inundated with musicians trying to find a place in the Latin scene. Most of them and their influence were absorbed by the successful Big Bands, joining up with Puerto Rican, Dominican, Colombian and Jewish musicians. For a while all seemed rosy—and it was for a couple of years. Then suddenly the Latin scene was moribund: Rock and Roll was here to stay.

#### The '60s

The Beatles went to NY; Vietnam was hot; Venezuela was savouring its new democracy and fighting guerrillas; Santo Domingo (which shares half an island with Haiti) was invaded by the American Marines; the flower-loving hippies popped up. And in 1964, the big blow: the Palladium, heart and home of Latin music, lost its alcohol licence. To the Latin scene and bands that depended on big clubs and dances for a sure and large audience, this meant no booze, no dance, no fun, no money. The long traditional concept of Big Bands had to be reviewed.

The Palladium was not an isolated case, but one of a chain reaction. The US was going through an anti-Communist rage—this meant anti-Cuban, and Latin music is Cuban music. The effects were felt from venue owners and record companies alike . . . Crisis. What in the 50s had been euphoria and growth, in the 60s was gloom and disbanded groups. As a result of the generally anti-Cuban attitude, America then looked at Brasil for a possible candidature to take its place—and the *Bossa Nova* stepped in.

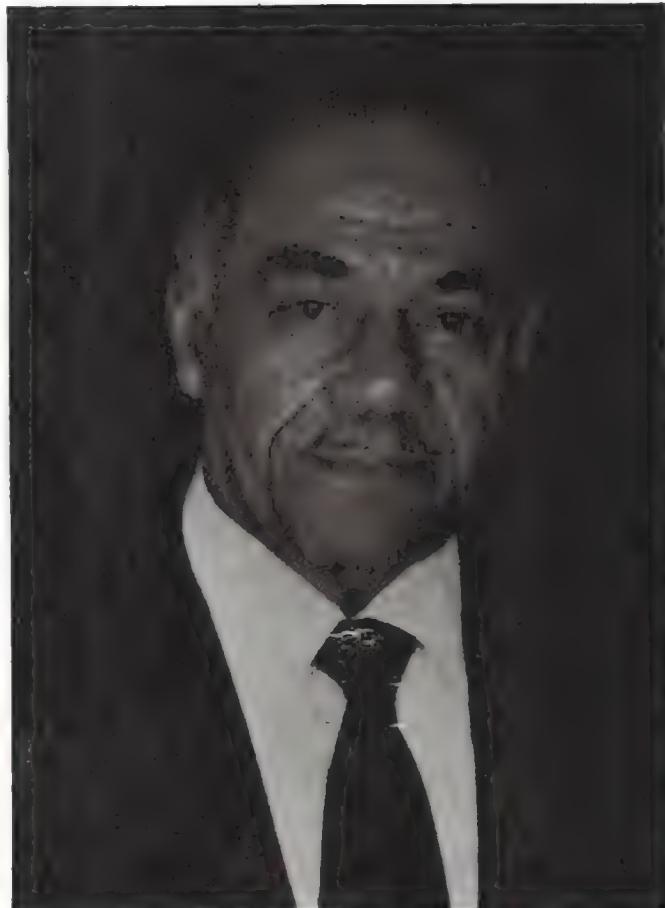
With the large public being seduced by Pop, including the growing Latin middle class, Machito and Puente swerved to their old flame—Latin-Jazz. Tito Rodriguez watered down his beat and concentrated on smoochie boleros. The other groups



Above: The Lecuona Cuban Boys charm sausages Egypto-Latin style. Note 1935 fez and turban chic

Below:

# MACHITO!



who didn't fit in any of these categories looked for other exits, and were more or less survivors, playing and recording whenever possible through the Alegre label. They put out mainly Charanga records, especially by Johnny Pacheco. Then suddenly they released a particularly strange record: 'La Perfecta', a modest *orquesta* with a line-up of two trombones, piano, bass, tumba and bongo, led by Eddie Palmieri—*younger brother of Charlie*, who did the arrangements. It was the first time NY had heard the trombones in a section on their own.

The idea was not new: Mon Riviera already used them as the only element to accompany his *Bomba* singing. But the new arrangements by Palmieri were to determine the sound of future music. Far from reproducing the sound of the jazz band, two trombones couldn't anyway give the ostentatious sound of a Big Band; they sounded hoarse and violent. In addition, the music no longer directed to the big halls but to el Barrio—the neighbourhood where it came from in the first place. In sounding like that neighbourhood, it lost its glamour.

By the start of the 70s, this new sound, very much NY's own, was firmly matured. Latin record production had graduated, and the quality of Pacheco's *Fania* catalogue was first class and established. By 1975 the 'boom' was in the air, and this new sound-product had to be seized, controlled, marketed and sold. In line with the commercial establishment, the music had to be given a name—and SALSA was born.

The stories about where, when and who used the word first are similar to that of jazz. The three that still resist the cobwebs of time are: Ignacio Pineiro's son of the late 20s, 'Echale Salsita'; Frederico y su Combo's 1966 Venezuelan record

'Llegó la Salsa' (salsa has arrived) and in the same year, a DJ on a local radio station in NYC had a programme called 'La Hora del sabor, la Salsa y el Bembe'. Izzy Sanabria, the immodest editor, publisher, designer and writer of *Latin NY* magazine, claims to have yanked the word from audience use as a sign of appreciation, and used it on his TV shows. The word was certainly established by 1975 for the Fania film 'Salsa'.

The Salsa boom established the music once and for all, in its own right, throughout the Caribbean and the world. It was no longer 'nigger music'. What had once been Afro-Cuban, Latin, Caribbean, is now Salsa. Like the Rumba in earlier days, the term envelops the most varied sounds, cross-overs, and people only NY could have put together. *Salsa, Guaguanco, Son, Montuno, Plena, Cha-Cha-Cha, Rumba, New Yorkian*—whatever the name, this music has entered a universe where there is no claim. It belongs to nobody, and everybody, but especially to those who make it and those who dance to it.

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# The angelic squeaking of a dozen penny trumpets

by STEVE BERESFORD

I still remember my disappointment when, as a schoolboy in Shropshire, I went to the local carnival to see 'jazz bands', and was confronted by dozens of young women dressed as drum majorettes, in military formation, playing pop songs on highly polished kazoo.

Ronnie Wharton and Arthur Clarke—who have written two very interesting books\*—would never use the word 'kazoo'. It's an American import, they say, along with the drum majorette costumes. The kazoo was called a *Tommy Talker* (because soldiers used them for signalling in the trenches in WWI) and the bands were called *Tommy Talker bands*. What's more, they were generally grown-up musicians, wearing a huge variety of costumes—pirates, donkeys, Old Mother Rileys, bears, transvestite policemen, vicars, ghosts—and played a huge variety of very low-tech instruments.

The principal instrument—the *mirliton*—was radically modified with rubber and tin extensions to make it resemble a euphonium, trombone, lamp post, cricket bat or whatever. There were also gramophone horns, marbles in bottles, kettles, watering cans, washboards, bones, spoons. (You can see parallels in current improvised music, and also people at Notting Hill carnival, playing coke cans.)

All this ad hoc-ism was to do with the musicians' economic status—the bands were most prevalent in the West Riding of Yorkshire during the depression years, 'Quite a few were recruited from the Young Street Means Test' we are told.

R.W. and A.C. trace the roots back to several phenomena—the 1860s 'waffin fuffin bands led by screeching flageolets and drums of varied deadness', '1870s bletherhead music—the blatant roar of the serpentine tin instruments, clear ringing tones of the cornet, the angelic squeaking of a dozen penny trumpets, the tootle tootle of the fife, and an assortment of drums, tin cans, pots and frying pans'.

There were also more politically oriented groups—the roughbands of the West Riding, which were often aligned to the Chartist movement, and the busking bands of the Jewish quarter in Leeds (mouth organs, tin whistles, cans, tin baths) which often lost the support of local firms when they supported strikes.

The *Tommy Talker bands*—Doctor Mac and his Patients, Judy Wood and the Blue Bells, the Splisham Splashum Band, the Holbeck Jungle Band, and lots of others, also had routines for the carnivals and competitions. 'Jack Whitehead . . . would drop the dog down the front of his baggy pants and pretend to shoot the animal. The dog then rolled out of his trousers . . . and lay "dead" on the ground.' A.C. and R.W. don't make it clear, but it would seem the patriotic numbers ('The Death of Nelson' was a favourite) were presented with a certain amount of irony. The Crown Street Comic



The Crown Street Christmas Band, 1929

Band's performance of a little girl, draped with a Union Jack and holding a shield and fork.

Songs like 'Tiptoe through the Tulips' and 'Ramona' obviously had potential for a little acting and parody. There was also a popular sketch called 'Wooden Hill to Bedfordshire'.

It's no wonder that the streets where the musicians lived followed the bands with great interest. On occasions, homing pigeons were dispatched from the carnival to let the street know of a success, and everyone would stay up for the triumphant return.

Both little books are packed with stories—the rentman with 'septic knuckles', the 'Indian squaw'—Hepzibeth Acklam from Bradford—and bear witness to a great collective, anarchic, creative, working-class tradition, which no doubt 'denied . . . the composers' wish', but had more important things to do than accurately render a score.

\*'Crown Street Comic Band', 1977. City of Bradford Libraries. 'The Tommy Talker Bands of the West Riding', 1979. Yorkshire Arts Association. Both by Ronnie Wharton and Arthur Clarke.



Diamanda Galas - photo by Kent Strother

## Wild women with steak knives

by HANNAH CHARLTON

I first saw Diamanda Galas perform in the extremely incongruous setting of a gymnasium at ten o'clock in the morning. Moers festival 1980. The workshops were in a school set aside from the main festival area in amongst the quiet residential streets, and in a gym complete with basket ball goals dangling ropes and work out mats, Diamanda Galas was tussling with a young technician, natty in two-tone, but not wild about all the mikes required for her PA system. She is an imposing figure—slinky black jeans, black shirt and boots, with a mass of black hair framing a face more likely to be seen on a Greek movie. Imperious, silhouetted, a chiselled, cultivated tragedienne image which brooks no nonsense.

When she starts, it's unnerving. The hackles rise, the skin prickles at the sound which is like a laser beam streaking out of some turbulent past. The incongruity of the place becomes all the more apparent as the day light and the trappings of the gym seem to isolate her, to cast in relief this iron and steel anguish.

The voice is immense. She has chosen a route far from any notion of the voice as a singing instrument. Instead the vocal chords are a keyboard to be pummelled, hewn, tautened to the point where it is obvious that the physical strain involved is extensive. At times it seems like self-inflicted punishment as though the voice had to make reparation for mental and psychic torment.

Diamanda Galas has worked in many different contexts: in collaboration with composers/directors Vinko Globokar, Bernard Rands, Jean-Charles Francois; in the Improvisational Music Ensemble (co-founded by herself) which includes Bertram Turetzky on bass, Mark Dresser on bass and James French on saxophones. She has also worked with guitarist Henry Kaiser. She has written several works for solo voice, many drawing on Greek themes. In these real-time compositions she uses her voice as a medium suggesting certain operatic rituals such as Greek tragic theatre, and other Ecstatic theatres. When she uses prepared tape in her compositions she aims at vocal production which will provide a continuity between the human and the non-human.

This invariably makes for a distance between her and the listener—it is as though there is a carefully guarded performance territory which cannot be shared by an audience but venerated, like a temple. This means that I felt certain emotions being nurtured—rather like feeling subservient to the artiste.

This was not a journey for the audience to make with the performer, but a private, meticulous operation to be watched and even feared. Why feared? Perhaps because there was something glacial at the heart of this music, something so painfully constructed, so consciously torn out of private suffering. There was an incredible mixture of nakedness and conscious cultivation of pain. Expressionist, of course, but at some point I could not bring anything of my own to identify with it, to share it, to learn from it. It was as though the walls were too high, too

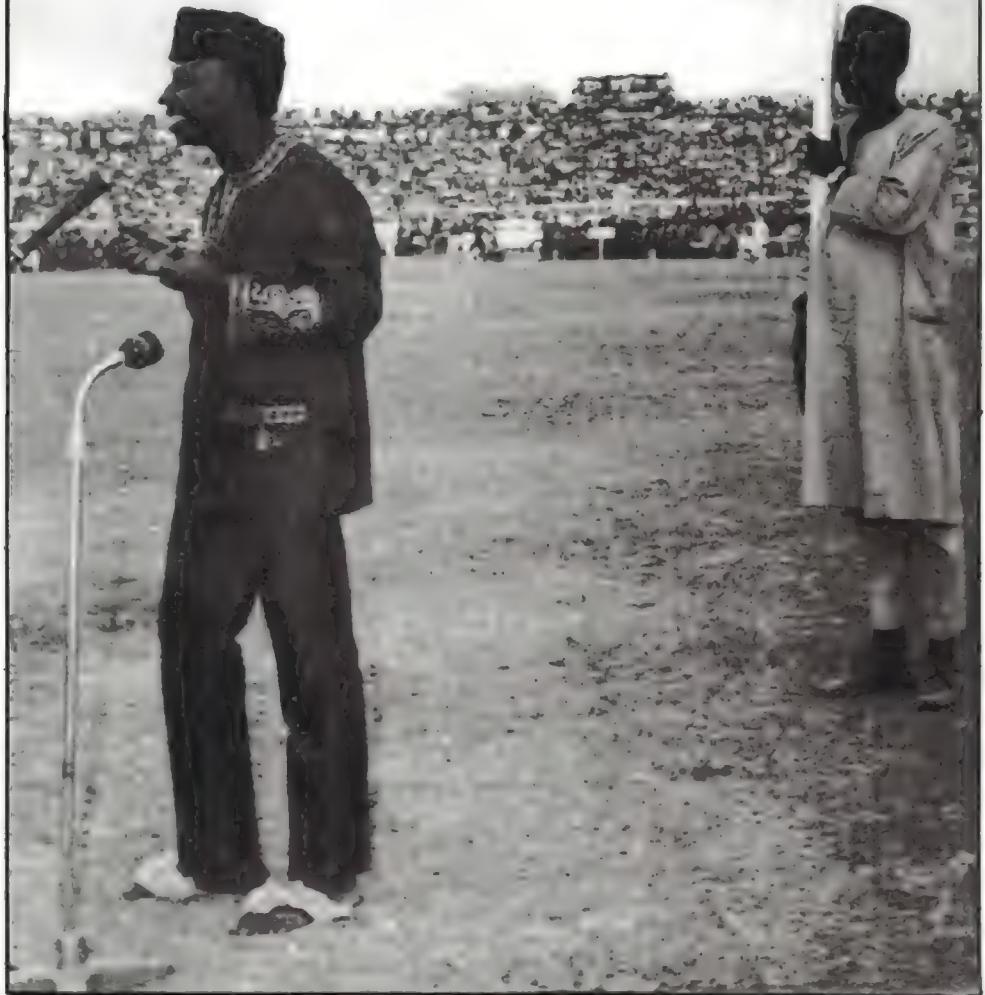
impenetrable. I could only stare in amazement.

There are other women using voice as an instrument which do not have this effect. Tamia, for an example. I would like to see Diamanda Galas in the context of her theatre work—in a total environment of her own making. Perhaps then I would not feel this distance, this gulf which was so apparent in that gym. She is a performer with an outstanding presence, an artistic identity which she projects in massive detail down to angle of hand movements, the quivering body, the rapid fire of the voice, the inchoate babbling, the searing keening. She is undoubtedly a performer who stimulates extreme reactions—and I would watch her again and again, perhaps most of all because she mirrors and dramatizes neurosis in a way that blurs the distinction between the public and the private self.

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# INSULTING WITH FLATTERY



NIGERIAN PRAISE SONGS

**Barbara Peterson**

How can one transform a stingy man into a generous one, an unknown into a celebrity, drive a sensible man to acts of rashness, or quell a riot, raise an army—or even bring down a ruler? For many centuries in West Africa the answer has been a simple one—to let a praise singer sing. Today songs of these African singers offer a potent parallel to songs of social comment voiced by other groups, of which the black Americans have received the most attention. The Nigerian singers of whom we shall speak possess several advantages over others who share their style: access to everyone in their society, freedom of comment amounting to license, and great commercial success.

In 1973 I asked a leading praise singer in Hausaland, Northern Nigeria, to describe the greatest change he had seen in his profession during the quarter of a century he had been performing. The singer, *Shata*, answered,

'Nowadays people are enlightened. My songs are much the same as before but people do not get so stirred up because of them. When I sing to a king I remind him, just as I did twenty years ago:

"Your generosity is so great that you have already given me a horse and a saddle and a good house—all that is lacking is a wife!"

but twenty years ago, with the people of his court all around him, my song would inflame him! He would have stopped at nothing to reward with a wife—even to taking one from one of his ministers! Just last year a king sent me a new wife, but it was six months after my song.

And then, there is my song about the lorry driver—twenty years ago my praises would have driven him mad, he would have died, I tell you. Today the envy of the other drivers has made trouble for him, but it did not kill him, he only left the country.'

I said I had been told that at his recent concert in Niger (the neighbouring country) he had been given five cars and two new wives. 'Yes, that is so, and both the women were the daughters of ministers!' . . . the singer proudly replied.

Shata is a new Nigerian, enjoying, like so many other Nigerian singers, the fruits of his country's new prosperity. For at least the past 900 years of recorded history, Shata's counterparts have been at work, in this vast near-desert area of the Western Sudan, refining their eloquent craft and marking the major events that have shaped the Hausa way of life. The coming of Islam, the collision of empires (Bornu vs Songhai, the British vs the French), colonial rule, Independence and recent Civil War, all have a place in their chronicles or songs. Whereas in the medieval kingdom of Kano a praise-singer would

mount the turning wheel, mount the stool to celebrate, still rely on the presence of the entertainers, singers have been public—now strong.

Truth is... Although other Nigerian have never been entering enter over the contact middle wartime which to scholars, historian blo Hausas sympath casts be and Voice places a and South 30 years have bee India.

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mount the city walls to salute returning warriors, today's singers will mount the dais in national stadiums to celebrate events of state. People still rely on them to capture the essence of the personalities and events in the news, and by their gifts for entertaining and stirring people up, the singers have kept a hold on their public—now estimated at 60 million strong.

### Truth is Hard to Tell

Although Hausas are regarded by other Nigerians as conservative, they have never been isolated; their trading enterprise and religious bonds over the centuries have kept them in contact with the Muslim African and middle Eastern world. Pilgrimages, wartime service in the British Army which took them to Europe and Asia, scholarships to Western and Communist block countries have exposed Hausas to other ways of life. Hausa sympathies are cultivated by broadcasts beamed at them by the BBC and Voice of America, and also from places as diverse as Moscow, Cairo and South Africa. For at least the last 30 years favourite films in Hausaland have been musical feature films from India.

Yet for all the availability of alternative models, Hausa singers have little involvement in the musical 'identity crisis' that afflicts other Nigerian singers, who have borrowed largely from Western musical and instrumental styles. Their lyrics are topical, reflecting the interests of the moment. Their instruments are traditional—generally drums, lutes or fiddles—enabling them to go where the action is and make a quick getaway where necessary. As the Hausa saying goes:

'Truth is hard to tell. I have told it; give me my sandals and I will be off.'

In the eyes of their public, Hausa singers make an occasion complete and are a part of every major event in a Hausa's life. From the day when family and friends gather to welcome and name a new-born, to youthful flirtations on street corners (where musicians encourage dancing and voice the boasts that the youth would like to make), to wedding festivities, to the celebration of a man's promotion in his career, there are singers at hand. Apart from these occasions a person wishing to promote a friendship or a love affair, or alternatively to weaken a rival in business or politics or love, will pay a singer to 'act as his voice', flattering, cajoling or abusing, as appropriate. And when an expert singer has been on the scene, he can leave such turbulence in his wake that things do not seem the same afterwards.

To lead the reader to expect, in the space of a short article, an ex-

planation of the personal force or impact displayed by singers like Shata would indeed be rash. But if we disallow various singers' claims of magical powers and assume that they achieve their reputations as gifted entertainers and manipulators of men by other means, it can be useful here to encounter a few singers in the situations in which they devise their songs, and let some impressions of how they operate from such encounters.

One man said to me, 'Our songs are not just entertainment, they tell us about the world and the people in it, great and small.' Singers, by virtue of their mobility and their freedom to ridicule the powerful, are able to satisfy the curiosity of the man-in-the-street for gossip about the great, and to let those in power know how they are regarded by the ordinary people. Nowadays the singers also base much of their humour and their social comment upon the competition between the old and the new. In present-day Nigeria, there are countless rivalries and accommodations to be found between the modern, the Islamic, and even older African ways underlying everyday life. Singers like Shata, now playing the part of trickster, now public spokesman, now sage, shape their songs to appeal to whatever audience is at hand, whether the audience be traditional or modern in its value or pretensions.

For instance, two songs by another singer on the subject of drink start from opposing premises—the first accepts that the city man knows all about it. The singer is *Dan Maraya*, whose following is as devoted as that of Shata. His song about Haruna the drunkard, salutes Haruna and his friends, all of whom were notorious drinkers. The singer points out that

among Haruna's parents, grandparents, and entire family there is not one who drinks. In the song he has Haruna state that it is all right to drink, that there is no harm in it. This song, with its gentle chiding, would please the older member of society. By way of contrast in a later song about the drinking clubs, *Dan Maraya* describes a club scene which is instantly recognizable to regular drinkers; the youngster in the Chubby Checker shoes, hair in a quiff, hopeful of getting the barmaid for the night, being shown up by the big spender at the next table who always gets her.

### Praising and Adding Salt

#### Truths told as if they are Lies

The singers' appeal to their public lies in their knack for being wherever the action is, and in revealing the truth about people and events on everyone's lips. Should they choose to ridicule a person they have the ability to make the 'victim' of their songs reveal his true nature, often before the eyes of an attending crowd, and their talent for creating catchy tunes and lyrics allows a man's\* foibles to be sung or chanted morning after morning in the compounds, lanes and markets of Hausaland.

The outsider may wonder why, in praise-singing, praise and ridicule seem to go hand-in-hand. When a situation spontaneously presents itself, singers will be quick to seize the opportunity to perform. Their craft is sometimes described as 'praising and adding salt', and it is the bite in their remarks that attracts passers-by and that assists the singers in their aim of attracting additional patrons. By impromptu praises they may manipulate a growing crowd for hours, spinning out their songs in praise of one, and another, then

another of the listeners. Among those who pay the singers and expect to be praised, few will possess such outstanding qualities as to sustain praises of epic nature. In performances that may last 5 or 6 hours one may therefore expect singers to fall-back upon certain formulas to sustain them and to whet the crowd's appetite. The singer's knowledge of local gossip, the men's circle of associates, and genealogies may provide starting points for his comments, enabling him to point out why this man is not like the others we know, or why the others we know are not like this man. Truths, half-truths, and, as Hausas say, 'truths told as if they are lies', enlarge the line of comments by which singers may differentiate one man from others.

One formula is to say about a man who expects to be praised for something that is so obviously untrue that the listeners' response to the outlandish praises will cause amusement and make the person a laughing-stock. For instance, as Shata sang about a notoriously stingy man:

'Here is Garba, a man to be reckoned with. Whenever I play in front of his house, whatever he touches he brings out and gives to me. He gave me 1,000 shillings and when he went back into his house again I ran away, because what he gave me was too much!'

Along the same lines, a singer may want to embarrass a chief who is known to be oppressing his local area. Another prominent singer told me that he will not sing to the chief directly but will await a gathering of other chiefs of equal rank. Then following an invitation to sing he will address the local chief in this manner:



### Photos –

left: Dan Maraya entertains

right: Shata, Dan Maraya and younger singer receiving an award

'It is only you among chiefs  
—(though not those gathered here)  
who takes care of his subjects  
for your sake people thank  
you  
for repairing roads  
also we have many  
fertilities [sic]  
we have electricity  
we have a water pump  
May God bless you more and  
more  
so that among you are the  
best  
people will be very sorry  
when you are no more  
In your time people are pay-  
ing less tax  
The one whom you just  
succeeded, that one did  
nothing,  
but you are the best  
We pray to God to see that  
you and your kindness stay  
long.'

The next day the chief will call the singer, or if he is too proud will send someone to the singer saying, 'I don't want him to praise me like that', and give the singer enough to keep him quiet.

While both the above singers offered praise of the men concerned the effect has been to make them appear ridiculous. The singers throw out two challenges that appeal to Hausas: first, their flattery excites people's spirit of generosity; and second, both their flattery and ridicule test people's equanimity, an aspect of character highly valued under Islamic Sufism, which prevails here. People's equanimity—some would say 'cool'—is matched by the singers' cunning in exploiting their vanities. It follows that the arrival of

a singer gives men a chance to show what they are made of. And if a song catches on, a man's 'cool' can go on being tested for months, or even years.

### Blowing up like a Bellows

Inflated language plays a large part in praise-singing and one of the singers' techniques is described as 'blowing up like a bellows'. For instance, even an ordinary tailor, who may only have served the humblest, can still have his reputation enhanced by a good song. Take for instance, a song by Dan Maraya, *Isa Bila Dogo Nahawa* (Keri-Keri label).

First he places Isa the tailor in the company of the most exalted:

The singer declares that if he looks to the East, West, North, or South, to the seven heavens and throughout the earth, he sees no being like God—and none to compare with Isa.

Then the singer acclaims Isa as a master craftsman:

'Isa Bila, tailor  
the tailor surpassing  
tailors  
a tailor to defeat  
tailors . . .  
he has taken away all the  
profits of tailoring.'

And in an aside he reminds listeners of the generosity he expects them to show:

'I don't praise because of  
hunger  
I don't praise in order to  
steal  
the man who gives to me is  
better than me.'

He then rounds upon the man's rivals in tailoring:

'Some are just suffering in  
this craft  
bungling in front of their  
Singer  
[sewing machine] . . .  
without skill except in  
cutting cloth too short . . .  
the father of such a thief  
[is himself a thief] . . .  
I say in the name of God  
an airplane should carry  
the son of the old man  
it takes him a thousand  
miles up  
and lets the bastard  
drop . . .  
Asking a scoundrel to do  
tailoring  
is like asking a leper to  
drive a car . . .

What is nonsense of  
tailoring?  
You eagerly bring a yard  
of cloth  
No money back  
No tailoring  
No explanation  
either the tailor  
or the owner of cloth  
is angry—  
You, the tailor  
You slap him  
You know tailoring has  
become squalid  
but Isa doesn't do these  
things . . .'

In the local situation members of the crowd will know tailors who fit each of these descriptions, and would enjoy such allusions whether the men were named or not.

### Risks and Rewards

Some experts suggest that praise-singing, with its characteristic undertone of insinuation, is the likely forerunner of calypso, 'the dozens', and other styles of innuendo practised in black cultures of the Americas. While scholars may occupy themselves with such questions for years, in Hausaland it is the present vitality of the tradition that strikes one. A praise-song sung on the radio about an individual may make him or her an instant celebrity; in recent years these have included a hotel owner, a customs inspector and even a prostitute.

Shata, as he stated, takes credit for the fact that the lorry driver whom he made a hero had to leave the country. Shata's fans explain that the driver's employers feared he would burn out too many engines in trying to live up to the reputation the singer had created for him—that of being the fastest driver in Nigeria. It was common knowledge that as soon as other drivers recognized him on the road they would put his standing to the test. His firm dismissed him, and because of the reputation created for him by the song he was unable to find other work in Nigeria.

As shown by this account, fame can sometimes be costly or even hazardous to the person raised up by the singer to a state of celebrity or notoriety. (Equally, the singer's rise to fame can be hazardous in extreme cases when a man of power wants to avenge himself on a singer. Retribu-

tion may be sought over a song or over the singer's refusal to praise him. But that is another part of the story to be told in future.) Apart from the above rare cases of vengeance, once a song has caught on the singer benefits, no matter whether the fortunes of the person sung about prosper or decline. This is because some of the public are paying any singer to stop singing about a man and others are paying him to say even more—whether in praise or in ridicule.

The singers have sometimes been described as extortionists, which would suggest that they were commonly avoided or condemned. However, during my stay in Northern Nigeria I found tremendous public interest in the singers and in the rivalries they fomented—both between themselves and between those the singers were championing. The cars, houses and wives given Shata by his fans indicate the breadth of his appeal and prove that those supporting him are among the more prosperous in society.

### Censorship Sidestepped

When it comes to the issue of a new record, the foremost singers are accustomed to having a free hand in the choice of the songs they will release. Dan Maraya has his own recording studio. Shata tells EMI what songs he will record. While behind the scenes he promotes and assists other musicians, both young and old, Shata likes playing the part of public rogue and enjoys needling top people in his songs. The following was recounted to me by scores of people from the day of my arrival in Hausaland.

In a song called *Hassan ma Hussaini*, which was a cause célèbre for a time, Shata sang that a certain official, a relative of an Emir, boasted that he represented both the past and the present, that he was both a traditional and a modern man. Capitalizing on this stand, he had taken over all the jobs in his district. Selling, buying, marketing, he did them all—contracts, he had them all, this 'greedy prince'. His district suffered mass unemployment—no one else had work but he. Then, when tinned tomatoes were distributed to help the ordinary people, he became the most prominent of the ordinary people, and had all the tins for himself. And, in a telling shot, Shata says that the official even took some of the tins to his farm and planted them.

A few of Shata's records have been banned from the radio and withdrawn from circulation. These actions, however, are not due to EMI's judgement that his lyrics were in breach of taste, but resulted from libel suits undertaken by victims of Shata's innuendo. When a song has had a good public response before its banning, Shata is apt to issue a follow-up record under another title, packed with his rejoinders and further insinuations.

I asked Shata at the close of our interview what someone could do if they didn't like the song being sung about him. Shata's answer was succinct: 'If he is in a club he can



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walk out; if he hears it on the radio he can just switch the radio off!'

Shata's reply is not at all exceptional, given the general climate of public tolerance. I happened to be at the radio station at Sokoto when a raw and rough group of dundufa drummers arrived for an audition. *Dundufa music* is mainly associated with blacksmiths who in Hausaland, as in other parts of Africa, are ascribed almost the lowest social stand-

ing. Their music is said to be reminiscent of the 'pagan' past, and is thought to be very rude. The activities described in the lyrics are, in fact, as explicit as English rugby songs, and following usual Hausa form would satirise people known to at least some of the listening public. Knowing public sensitivities to such music, I was fascinated to hear how the studio announcer handled the introductions on the day of broad-

casting. 'Next', he said, 'we are going to hear so-and-so, players of dundufa music. Now we all know that such music is obscene. We all know that very well. So I am going to give you fair warning that if you do not like this kind of music, you should switch your radios off for the next few minutes. I shall not be pleased if I hear that great numbers of you have telephoned the station to complain that we are playing obscene music!'

#### Notes

My research in Nigeria was made possible by a grant from the Ford Foundation whose assistance is gratefully acknowledged.

\*My continual reference to 'men' rather than 'persons' or 'individuals' reflects the cultural situation in which few women are sufficiently in public view to become the object of the singer's attentions.



# TANT VOICES

listening to  
short-wave radio

...ing to  
short-wave radio

And so there go superstars like particular things you can get down bottom dollar on it as texture play so Japan. The news and they play folk relatively shorty pop music almost like Vietnamese and the like, presenters pop the meandering instrumental just like s. Especially interspersed with ballads, a son type intermissions who d salut

the pills, longish chunks of cottony  
but elegant more or less. In short, real  
Persian chamber music, which is to say  
slifflupper-up stuff, literally helped me break out  
very movin' me programme-centre.  
the Euro-centre, much for the  
of the Western radio and much for the  
world outside. English, I think, was the  
the only English I came across that had  
the darts like English I used to play  
uch... what did it suppose if you were all  
class... I amirk, I'm said about traffic  
e Radio Tirana. I'm said about traffic  
James Cameron's modern roads,  
use—overdressed car in  
wide modern rickety car, but if  
you're one whatever or your  
med out of your  
Tirana's unruled  
o with "Goods  
You've a  
soars sound a  
thnic, quote  
718, and 514

And is there any other way of doing  
particular things? You can get some  
bottom dollar on it, and texture, texture,  
Japan. The very short, and they play folk  
music, Vietnamese, and you could almost  
call the programme during early English  
lockeys. Especially interspersed with just this  
bits, when type instrumentals, ballads, about  
pop-group, coming off to  
ments are sentimental, side-of-sentimental things like farmers and soldiers, etc.  
be soldiers, Spring Romances, etc.  
One thing I've noticed about makes it  
Chinese, or is the unique, and, I'm not  
sure, as in regular phrases, I'm not  
going to the white notes.  
as notes, to all Chinese notes  
common, to a really elastic, None of  
the music, but a really elastic, HO CHI MINH-type  
melodic range.

BY  
ROBERT  
WYATT

collage by  
JILL MUMFORD





# WHOSE MASTER'S VOICE ?

## THE WORLD'S LARGEST RECORD COMPANIES

The World's Largest Record Companies

1. Polygram (FRG/Netherlands)
2. CBS (USA)
3. Thorn-EMI (including since 1979 United Artists) (UK)
4. Warner Communications (USA)
5. RCA (USA)
6. MCA (including since 1979 ABC) (USA)
7. Bertelsmann/Ariola (W. Germany)
8. A&M (USA)

By the end of the 1970s, the USA accounted for 40% world record sales; Japan and FRG 10% each; France 8% UK 6%.

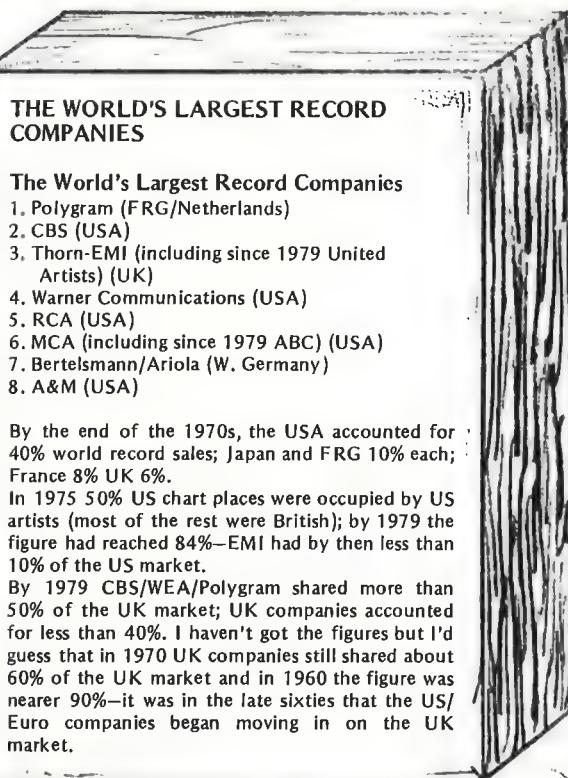
In 1975 50% US chart places were occupied by US artists (most of the rest were British); by 1979 the figure had reached 84%—EMI had by then less than 10% of the US market.

By 1979 CBS/WEA/Polygram shared more than 50% of the UK market; UK companies accounted for less than 40%. I haven't got the figures but I'd guess that in 1970 UK companies still shared about 60% of the UK market and in 1960 the figure was nearer 90%—it was in the late sixties that the US/Euro companies began moving in on the UK market.

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## K-Tel

is not a record company but a TV-merchandizing organization which started (in Canada) by selling



## WHO OWNS WHAT in the UK RECORD INDUSTRY



### Philips

owns the other half of Polygram; bigger British presence than Siemens, with an obvious concentration in the consumer field. Was the market leader in cheap cassette players, for example, though now facing stiff competition from even larger American and Japanese competitors (Sony has usurped its market place). As with the other electronics companies, Philips' research reaches into the military field. The company has, for example, developed a night viewing system for use in counter-terrorist activities and 'Northern Ireland situations'. But

music in its various offshoots is still central to Philips' revenue. Dutch based.

### Polygram

is a joint manufacturing/distribution company that

### Virgin

is the personal property of Richard Branson, the Freddie Laker of the music scene. Compared to the majors, Virgin is small fry. But its importance is greater than a glance at its sales (2.9% of the total) reveals. Started in the 1960s as a retailer, Virgin is the most successful of the 'hippie capitalists' being able to undercut its rivals by modern stock control and the use of non-unionized labour and hence quick turnover (of goods and workers). It also gains from having a reputation as an alternative to the bureaucratic capitalist world of Big Business: Virgin has special access to (and profits from) new talent. Being a one-man show the company is able to adapt and react more quickly than the majors to market changes. Virgin remains heavily concentrated, though, in the British music field (its dabbling with reggae and the African market was not particularly successful)—the chain of high street shops is still the basis of its economy, though Virgin has interests in a variety of peripheral musical areas—studios, venues, cinemas, film distribution, video-making—and now runs a book publishers. Rock musicians have made Richard Branson a rich man. He is quoted as

saying: 'I am determined not to pay a penny to the taxman', and he has bought one of the smaller Virgin Islands for £250,000. As well as not wanting to pay a penny towards the upkeep of the Welfare State, Branson owns, via Virgin, an Advisory

60% of the UK market and in 1980 the figure was nearer 90%—it was in the late sixties that the US/Euro companies began moving in on the UK market.

by Leon Thorne.

Additional material —  
Simon Frith

Illustrations —  
David Toop

## THE RECORD SALES REVENUES CHART

### Island

Independent, still music-based, including studio and publishing. Special relationship with the Jamaican music business. Presently establishing their own distribution company in the UK.

### Ariola

Owns Hansa and Arista; owned by Bertelsmann, the second biggest book and record publisher in Germany. Rapidly expanding from its original print base into all forms of entertainment/education: film, music, video.

### MCA

In Britain MCA is a relatively small record label, dependent on manufacturing/distribution deals with other companies, but in fact MCA is one of America's major entertainment corporations. Its roots are in cinema—it was the biggest American talent agency in the 1950s then took over Universal Studios and absorbed Decca's American interests (eg Coral and UNI labels). Took over ABC Records in 1979. For a guide to the wheeling and dealing of the entertainment corporations see Armand Mattelart: *Corporations and the Control of Culture*.

### Siemens

is involved in the UK industry through its half-ownership of Polygram. One of the world's largest electronics companies: more than four times the size of Thorn-EMI, with a huge interest in all fields of electrical and industrial goods. Not concentrated in the music field. German based.

### K-Tel

is not a record company but a TV-merchandizing organization which started (in Canada) by selling household gadgets. It is a small but fast-growing company (sales increased by 33% in 1980) which packages and distributes other record companies' products. K-Tel operate on blitz TV advertising campaigns, marketing records in department chain stores like Woolworths and Boots. It has led a marketing revolution: TV advertised compilations now account for more than a third of UK album sales. From its Canadian base, K-Tel has become a mini-multinational (its TV selling techniques are equally effective in the USA), covering more than a dozen countries and branching out into oil and property. A firm based on the 'quick kill with high profit and high risk' motto.

### CBS

is one of the companies that has gained by the decline of UK-based firms. It has passed the once-dominant EMI in world record sales, for example. Basically an entertainment and communications company (TV/radio) concentrated in the USA, CBS also has Japanese interests and investments in musical instrument manufacture (eg Fender) as well as in the manufacture of recording and tv equipment. The same size as Thorn/EMI if with a narrower range of electronic interests.

### Thorn/EMI

covers the whole range of electronic and entertainment fields—not just music, and the HMV shops, but Rapier-guided missiles and Thames TV. They are the makers of NAIDAD, a system for the rapid detection of chemical warfare agents. They trade with and have subsidiaries in South Africa. The take-over of EMI by Thorn (a television rental company) was a response to the near collapse of EMI: the need in the 1980s is for electronic/entertainment units big enough to compete with the American, Japanese and European majors. Thorn now make what they distribute: electronic hardware and entertainment software.

### Precision Records and Tapes

(PRT as Pye is now called) is Lord Grade's little empire—it is owned by Associated Television Corporation, ATV's holding company. As well as records the company produces films (*The Jazz Singer*) and tv programmes (*The Muppets*). Owns Northern Songs, Lennon/McCartney's publishers. A recent plan to merge PRT with RCA fell through. Because of this there is talk of closing at least some of the Pye group. ATV, like EMI, still reflects its origins as a British show-biz concern; both companies have interests in a network of British agencies, management companies, music publishers, clubs, cinemas and dance halls; both companies are part of the Grade family connection.

market place). As with the other electronics companies, Philips' research reaches into the military field. The company has, for example, developed a night viewing system for use in counter-terrorist activities and 'Northern Ireland situations'. But

music in its various offshoots is still central to Philips' revenue. Dutch based.

### Polygram

is a joint manufacturing/distribution company that in Britain services Polydor (controlled by Siemens via Deutsche Grammophon) and Phonogram (controlled by Philips). Internationally, Polygram is now the biggest record company in the world (it owns Decca, formerly Britain's second major record company, and the American label Mercury); in 1978 Polygram became the first record company to top \$1 billion world wide sales. The company also controls Polyfilm, an international film making/distributing company which is beginning to challenge US dominance in this field, not least because of Polygram's astute film/record 'tie-in' marketing. Thus Polygram owns a controlling 50% of RSO Records (the rest is owned by Robert Stigwood) and Casablanca Records (ousting its founder, Neil Bogart) and funds the Who:

Polygram + RSO = *Saturday Night Fever*  
Polygram + Casablanca = *Thank God It's Friday*  
Polygram + The Who = *Quadrophenia*

These films opened up huge new possibilities of profit for multi-media, multi-national entertainment companies.

### RCA

A very large and powerful company based on electronics and communications hardware. RCA own a wide range of companies including Hertz Rentacar, NBC television and Random House Publishing. On the music scene, RCA is a US leader in classical and country music, having somewhat lost out to Warners and CBS in the rock field during the 1970s (though the death of Elvis temporarily boosted profits). They are heavily involved in military contracts with advanced electronics, space and satellite work.

### Warner Communications

is owned by the Kinney Corporation (which made its money out of car parks) and on the music scene represents the merger of Warner Brothers with a number of smaller labels—Elektra, Atlantic (hence WEA), Reprise, Asylum, Nonesuch etc. The company still specialises in 'custom labels' (such as the new Geffen label in the USA and the ill-fated Radar label in the UK)—such companies are wholly owned/financially controlled by WEA but are allowed to operate with independent A&R policies. 42% of Warners' record sales are non-US. Warner Communications is a giant in its particular field of entertainment, which covers the whole range: *Mad magazine*, the DC comics of *Superman* fame, *Ms.*, as well as music and films. It distributes *Playboy* through its subsidiary Independent News and owns the soccer team Cosmos. Trades in South Africa.

though Virgin has interests in a variety of peripheral musical areas—studios, venues, cinemas, film distribution, video-making—and now runs a book publishers. Rock musicians have made Richard Branson a rich man. He is quoted as

saying: 'I am determined not to pay a penny to the taxman', and he has bought one of the smaller Virgin Islands for £250,000. As well as not wanting to pay a penny towards the upkeep of the Welfare State, Branson owns, via Virgin, an Advisory Agency called 'Help'.

### Virgin, Island and Chrysalis

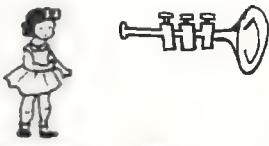
were the most successful of the independent British record companies formed at the end of the 1960s. But Chrysalis has really boomed since punk; it was the company which tapped most successfully the new groups' concern for 'independence' (thus, for example, the 2-Tone deal or Spandau Ballet's contract: the musicians get a certain amount of artistic control (over sleeve design, for instance) but Chrysalis keep tight control of the purse strings). The company is also by far the most successful independent British operator in the USA. Run by Chris Wright and Terry Ellis, Chrysalis has branched out into property, films and show biz generally. Like Virgin, a private company.

### A&M

The third private company on our chart. A private company is one that doesn't have to open its dealings to the 'public' (meaning share-holders) or issue an annual report. It is a policy of A&M not to give its annual turnover, but it was calculated at \$70-80 million in 1977 (compared to \$100m for MCA, \$400m for RCA, \$500m for Warners, and \$700-800m each for Polygram, EMI and CBS). It is still the world's largest independent record company (outgrossing Motown, for example). Co-founded by Herb Alpert in the 1960s, it flourished without setback until the late 1970s when the American majors established their own 'branch distribution', bypassing and thus destroying the independent distributors and putting all independent record companies in trouble. Some were bought out (eg UA by EMI), some went bankrupt (eg Private Stock, Capricorn). A&M survived by signing a manufacturing and distribution deal with RCA.

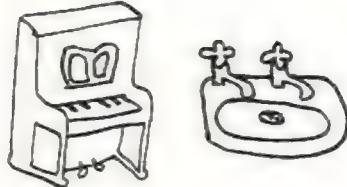
### Footnote to the Majors

a crucial development for electronics/entertainment companies in the 1980s is the mass marketing of videotapes, video-discs, video-playback machines, and competition is intense for the 'standard' design of the hardware involved. One effect of this competition is even larger scale company merging as companies co-operate to ensure that they can manufacture both the equipment on which videos will be played and the films/music to be played (as well as controlling video distribution). Hence the new deals between hardware and software manufacturers. The three dominant groups competing with each other to determine the pattern of future entertainment technology are EMI-Thorn/Japanese Victor; RCA/CBS/Sony; and Philips/MCA.



Listening to, & more/playing in etc. 'popular music' is still stressed as being a recognition of your half articulated cries of rebellion, these being sold to you as part of decision as to voice your agitation. A post-war phenomenon that is wearyly, specifically, for your consumption & despairs, & joy, & not for 'your parents'.

To want to assert this as still the alleged basis of some appeal may seem unhelpful or as beyond credibility by now. As to the second, it remains that every new relevant Initiative still urges you to moodily drown - out - the - house - with - your record-player; from the staggering dinosaur of the wild metal men battling again to the born-again futurists. As to the first, well these expectations are still taken up by the right, the left & the punters; so it seems to be crucial as to how those with purpose as well as imagination take up the music with relevance to the history of the subculture.



The base of this described appeal & sales talk was obviously a bit complicated right from the beginning. From before the first twitch, the revolt having been accommodated & usage round, was cultivated & presented. As the years pass & consuming accelerates, world imperialism tremors with the booms & slumps, this activity/pastime grows more redundant viz this selling point & yet is continually & is directly relevant as the mobilizing point for the angry youth of the western world.

Popular music took, continues to take, from a Creative Energy produced elsewhere like any Colonial Gain. Expression formed by those humming under a white man's burden (as the blues is quaintly pictured for history) has been expropriated. In obviously Noting this it is not meant to want to Disown the carrying off of such as if trophies (boycott the museums along with the sliced peaches). The music is transformed as well as repeated by young white male frustration (recognized 'in itself' in such as graphic 'white reggae'). But what attitude the music that wants to explicitly tumble with the contradictions & make a name for itself as Progressive, has to this history is more why it is mentioned by name.



As 'usual', references are being made that assume a definition of Creative Resistance or Cultural Activity that is to a certain market place, To Western pop music's idea of itself. Confirming the denial of any kind of musical activity, other than a familiar one of performer figuring in audience's leisure time, etc., etc. Other contexts are folkish & gone. This is Unproductive if the argument is that musical form was taken for kids to talk about mmmy gggeneration from people who might have different priorities in Recognizing their Oppressors.

So it remains that limitations in here are reinforcing the Issue: who else apart from the kids on the street might be Struggling. (Not that They should scream of anything else, themselves, but that they get the air-play ...).



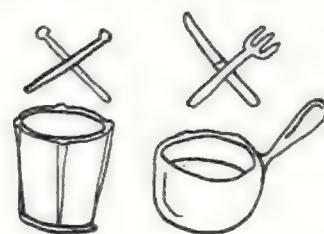
matriarchal past, not much for women to Reclaim: (hence how mechanistic & redundant RAS is to RAR—not the same conditions for such an assertion. Whatever criticisms of latter it is a slogan that is derived, not hoped for).

An increase has been noted in about every column that concerns itself with styles & protest in the appearance of women-in-rock. We are told that to different ends these (young) white women are self consciously in a different relation to their Means of production, to the heroines of before.

One perspective was articulated strongly in the mid-70s from women playing in the USA, then parts of Europe, as part of a self-styled 'feminist politic'. This time, just before the exclamations of 1976, was a particularly gross one, characterized by excessive parodies of aggressive repetitive guitar solos. This instrument becoming the genitalia/sexuality that the boy asserted in his joy, in a label that this group of women applied & now is a standard phrase of any rock journalist. (Briefly) the critique led to 'rock' being singled out as 'male'. Whereas the potential for female expression lay in 'soul & jazz'. This was not only what could

Going through & beyond the hailed days of 1976, & nearer the air waves is another manifestation of girls' music. More blasphemous & design of different grandeur, but surely still with Intent. The first girl group of the new wave (The Slits) were seen as an inspiration by many women to play; their name was an assertion of female genitalia/sexuality for some & a titillatory sales point for some (some the same too?). Just as their famous near-Nude pose was the source of agonizing for many serious young women—was this a strong women's choice or Pornography? Are you in control? Was whispered in earnest sisterhood.

As well as Flamboyant self definition against expectations, the group align themselves with those that want to be seen to be 'alternative' in their dealings with record/music production (cf 'autonomous' distribution



of such as Olivia records, more mainstream parts of the industry could now accommodate this drive for 'independence' in name & such).

The form their music took after a while however became not only a deeply rooted affair but an alternative patois. The overall defiance is now to be also supposed as similar to that of a Rastafarian, with duplicating of dressing & language ...

The result of singling out this one reaction to 'Babylon' as a vehicle is not a worn-out music at all but is, again, Uneasy.

# THE IMPERIOUS SNATCH

pictures by SHEZ & GIBLET  
by Caroline Scott



be described as a problematic differentiation, but is also grew into a monolith, & was a minor repetition of the imperious snatch.

For, although the lyrics were to Subvert ('then she kissed me') or to Radicalise (how oppressive to be an unpaid homeworker as well as wage slave), & every level of practice was examined (women technicians as well as musicians, accessibility & demystification re instruments in workshops, power without aggression in performance, etc.) . . . the music seemed a resurrection. It was not, for example, an appraisal of the conflicting influences at that time. Many bands were left playing a mild static funk which it was claimed was of a different sensibility? to Thrusting rock 'n' roll? With all the relevance that this subculture had for the fightback in the western world the product seems uneasy.

The severity of the religion involved, & the complexities of this are not particular to young white girls. It isn't a black reggae band that is showing her knickers off to acclaim; just as, on the other hand, feminist theorizing had to reject to some Extent the soul of such as M. Jackson for the oppressive stereotype of Woman that it advocates & revels in.

The often posed question of A woman's music is probably an irrelevant one—asked presuming a dislocation in this sphere from history & present, as well as being inside a Western format & orientation.



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# SAVAGE STATES: BOSMUN

Recording Music in New Guinea

WORDS & PHOTOS

by Ragnar Johnson



The Ramu River from the Haus Man

This excerpt is from Ragnar Johnson's unpublished manuscript *Savage States: A New Guinea Journey*. It records incidents, conversations, impressions, myths and ceremonies both in the 'bush' and in towns. This chapter is part of a description of a November 1979 expedition to record sacred flute music in the coastal villages near the Ramu River.

into the bush occupied me for over an hour. I looked at the two beautifully carved large *garamuts* (wooden slitdrums) at the foot of the *haus man* (man's house) and then at the spectacularly constructed interior of the *haus man* and out beyond into the village. What I saw fitted every criteria of what should constitute the perfect primitive fantasy. I didn't want to go back to Bogia. I would walk to Bosmun.

## THE WALK TO BOSMUN

Kanong and I set out accompanied by four boys, two of them his own children, one the child of his brother, and the fourth Gombreh's son. We walked along the path through the foliage, Kanong leading with a bush knife in his hand. Often the path was blocked with dead coconut palm fronds, fallen trees, or overgrown bushes. Kanong slashed them down with his bush knife. We were walking through the garden and bush land of Borai and Kanong pointed out wells of brown water which they used for leaching the poison out of sago pith. I was determined that no matter how tired I became, I wouldn't rest until we had walked for at least an hour. My clothes were soon wet with perspiration. I kept my eyes on the path because one had to climb over fallen vegetation and duck low hanging branches. Kanong and the boys got very excited when they spotted a marsupial which climbed to the top of a tree.

Sometime after the first hour Kanong stopped to piss and the boys picked a bunch of semi-ripe bananas which we ate. I asked them if they went to school and they said no, they didn't like it. For some reason this irritated me and I prevented myself from lecturing them on the importance of education. I kept pace behind Kanong and put my umbrella up because even in the dense forest the sun was very strong. Moving to avoid tripping over a root, I didn't notice a bush which caught against my umbrella. I walked right into the umbrella, banging and scratching my head on the metal frame. One more broken piece of skin to become infected in the Bosmun climate.

'Is it a big sore or a small sore?' I asked the children.

'It's a small sore.'

'Is the skin broken?'

'Only a little bit.'

'Is there any blood flowing?'

'Nogat.'

Relieved I walked on having collapsed my umbrella determined to pay more attention to the ground before my feet. I never got to see the forest unless we paused which was rarely. Only the path. Kanong at least had his *bugai* (betel nut) to chew. He told me that the *spaak* (intoxication) derived from chewing betelnuts was not like beer. Buai gave you energy and made your thoughts clear. I looked at him closely. Judging from the appearance of his eyes, he probably had a bad case of malaria.

## ENCOUNTERS

Up in the trees, a parrot registered our approach and began emitting high-pitched shrieks. Early on in the walk Kanong had used bird cries to signal to men working at a distance from the path. A group of parrots began squawking out to each other that we were in the area. I looked up and could see bright red and green feathers.

Since leaving the village gardens we had encountered no one on the path. Suddenly two of the orange coloured local dogs came into vision. I thought they were wild and hoped that they were not rabid. Growling they cringed away from us off the path. Then two women came into sight walking towards us carrying pots on their heads and string bags of vegetables hanging down their backs. I thought they looked a bit apprehensive and was surprised that neither they nor Kanong greeted each other. Then a man appeared and he and Kanong exchanged a few cold, curt words. We moved on.

'He didn't talk properly to me,' said Kanong. 'He's working sago in my bush and he knows that it's not his bush.'

'Why didn't he want to stop and have a good conversation with us?'

'Because he was afraid.'

We walked further into the bush. The four boys were delighted to be on the expedition and joked to each other incessantly. We arrived at a

I woke up feeling rested and asked Kanong how long it would take to get to Bosmun. Kanong said that the route consisted of walking through the bush for several hours until one reached a village on the Ramu River and then hiring a motor canoe of which there were many.

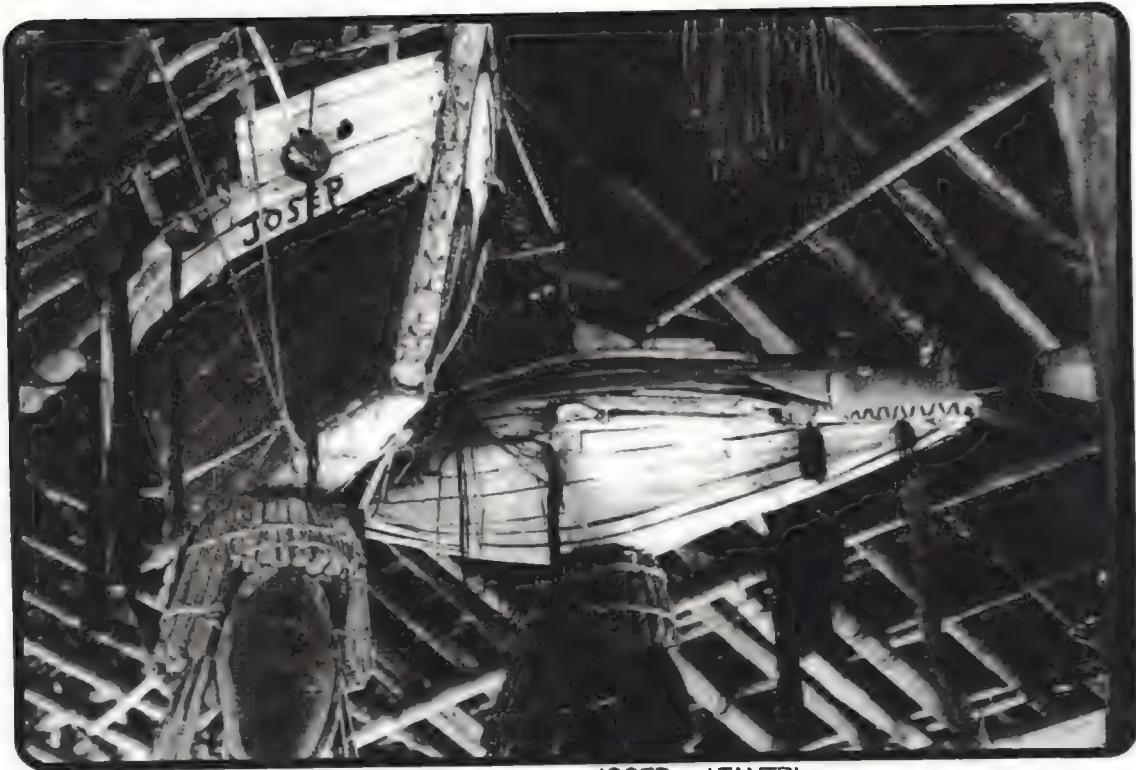
'Were there lots of flutes in Bosmun?'

'Oh yes, many.'

'Would we get there before dark?' I enquired, wary of the local sense of time because no one I had met except Magau wore a watch.

'No, we would get there in the afternoon.'

Kanong was quite eager to go and said he would carry my backpack. Karaman, Kanong and I drank some tea. Vacillating over whether I should go back to Bogia or take this walk



JOSEP and TANTRL

large stream. There were two bridges each made of a single log, one spanning the highest part of the banks and the other almost at the level of the water. Kanong pointed out some large catfish which were swimming about in the stream. The boys got very excited and ran down to the water. They chased after the catfish. One slashed at them with Kanong's bush knife and the others hit at them with sticks. I crossed the lowest log and waited for them on the other side. We set off again. The forest ended and the kunai grass began but Kanong decided to take another path which led through the forest. After a while we reached the kunai, walked through it, and came upon a double lane path. Kanong said it wasn't a car road.

'All right, it's not very far now. We walk down this road. It goes around a lake, then we will see a cow fence, and then we will be in the village.'

Because it lacked the light and shade and variegated flora of the forest, walking down the road through the kunai was almost as bad as walking through a desert. The humidity was extreme and all I could think of were the drinking coconuts which had to be waiting for me in the village. Kanong said it wasn't kunai grass but a crop planted to feed the cows. At the end of the expanse of this crop the forest began again but I gave up trying to gauge distances. Eventually we walked past the cow fence and into a village.

#### RIVERSIDE HAUS MAN

Kanong led me to a huge haus man overlooking the muddy waters of the Ramu River. It was very long and built on stilts which were at least five foot high. To get onto the platform we climbed up a log cut with a power boat to accommodate the

hewn table and sat down on a bench. I demanded drinking coconuts. When someone brought some, I drank two in rapid succession. Kanong was eating a huge mass of sago paste and Macau fish provided by one of his relatives. When he had eaten, he passed the carved wooden dish over to the four boys who ate hungrily. I tried a bit of sago paste and it wasn't unpleasant, but a bit flavourless like a glue made of flour and water, a kind of gelatine.

Feeling better, I walked around the platform of the haus man. Some murup masks (used in cargo cult ceremonies) were stored in the rafters. My attention was caught by two conical murup costume frames suspended from the roof scaffolding, lashed onto it at dancer's face level. There were figures at the top of the frames which were many times larger than the masks. One was a carving of a shark with sharp teeth, eyes, and tail fins. Painted on its side was the name 'Tanrl'. I found the other one much more interesting. It was a model of a European ship with cabin, smoke funnel, handrails around the sides, and a large square box deposited on the deck.

'Why carve a model of a steamship?' I wondered. 'Did the box on the deck represent Whiteman's cargo and was it a cargo ship bringing the goods from overseas to the people of the Ramu?' Written on the side of the ship was the name 'Josep'.

#### VISITORS

The sound of an outboard motor became audible and a canoe full of people gradually came into view. As the motor was cut, the canoe landed on the bank near to the haus man. This dugout had a recessed back like a power boat to accommodate the

motor and a crocodile head carved on the prow. The people of the Ramu didn't use outriggers on their canoes like the coastal peoples. The passengers climbed up from the river to the bank and the driver came up into the haus man and greeted Kanong. The man's face was dominated by his nose which had a large hole in the nasal septum, he wore a khaki shirt and long black trousers and he gave off the air of authority and power of a local notable. Yet another plate of sago paste and fish was produced for Kanong and company on his instructions.

#### MYTHS

I told him I had come to record paired flutes and he pulled a half-made one out of the recesses of the roof. Showing me how the flute consisted of two pieces of bamboo slotted together, he said that he was the only man in this hamlet who knew how to play the flutes and that he had not finished making his only flute. When I asked him about the ship and shark-headed murup costumes, he immediately said 'do you want to buy them?' Telling him that I had come to record flutes and not to buy carvings, I questioned him about the ship.

'Why is there a ship on top of this costume?'

'It's a ship.'

'Yes, but it's not your local fashion of ship, it's not a canoe, it's a European kind of ship.'

'We don't know.'

'Why has it got the name "Josep" on the side?'

'Just a name.'

'Is the box on the deck of the ship the cargo of the Mastahs?'

'It's just a box.'

'When was the ship made?'

'A long time ago, 1951, I think.'

The view from the prow of the haus man was a spectacular panorama of the flowing brown mass of the Ramu River bordered on each side by a thicket of bright green trees. It was so impressive that I sat down at the table and looked at it for minutes. The atmosphere was much more humid and malarial than Borai and Kaeen. Black flies and mosquitoes were everywhere and the men hit them off their skin with their hands or whisks.

The man began telling me a long involved ancestor myth of the Bosmun people. Two sisters, Djigam and Pwatan, discovered how to make flutes. Two brothers stole them. These women originated from a stone on the Bosmun River. They were married to a man called Ropor who had the alarming habit of removing his stomach and hanging it from the rafters of his hut. He couldn't eat until a stick cut an anus in his back-side. The man's penis was long like a snake until he copulated when it was cut down to normal size. Due to my torpor and the imprecision of pidgin, this was all I could grasp of the myth.

#### RIVER RIDE

The motor canoe owner agreed to take me to Bosmun for a charge of five kina and delegated someone else to act as driver. Kanong, the boys and I took my luggage to a relatively low part of the muddy bank and got into the narrow motor canoe. I was the last to get in and sat nearest to the prow. The canoe crossed the Ramu and drove upwards until after some time we stopped at a bank. The driver got out and came back with two girls and two paddles. They got in, one girl sitting on the prow in front of me.

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Our canoe went up the Ramu until we turned into a large channel on the right. Kanong told me it led to Bosmun. The water was slow and stagnant and the driver kept cutting the motor to avoid clumps of weeds. Mosquitoes bit the lower half of my back where my shirt came away from my trousers and because I was holding the tape recorder securely in my lap, I could not slap at them as the other canoe passengers were doing. The weeds became so dense that the motor was lifted out of the water and the two girls began paddling. Kanong said that the Bosmun River had choked up with weeds in the last month and that when the rainy season fully broke the volume of water would wash them out into the Ramu and clear the channel. With the two girls paddling, the canoe was moving by inches. Joking with them Kanong said 'You are young women with not enough strength to paddle. Give me a paddle and we will go quickly'. They laughed.

parts and told me that the store was closed on Saturday afternoons and Sundays.

### NEGOTIATIONS

On return to the haus man, I sat down with the men and discussed the possibility of recording flutes. I drank several coconuts. Yes, they had flutes, but the only men who knew how to play them lived at distant parts of the village so recording was only possible on the following morning. Flutes could not be played in the village except on important occasions and had to be hidden from the sight of all females so we would go to a garden house in the bush. They said that Radio Madang had recorded them a year or so previously. A modernist youth came with a cassette radio and they played me an incredibly distorted tape of the flutes taken off a radio transmission. Despite this, they sounded good and were called *Wrangneh*.

Chalked on the side of the centre post of the men's house was the slogan 'Byame thots no sweat thots Rangan'. The haus man was on the edge of a high ridge overlooking dense jungle. It was about one hundred feet long. Lashed to the end post was the skull of a pig, probably a memento of the feast made after the house had been built. I went over to the sandboxed fire around which the men were sitting, talking, and smoking, lighting their long newspaper rolled cigarettes with embers. We agreed that I would spend the night in the haus man. I negotiated the hire of a kerosene lamp from a man whose trustworthy features manifested a great familiarity in the art of ingratiating himself with white missionaries.

'Where is your lamp?' I was asked jocularly by some old men. 'Where are your pots and pans?'

### WASH WASH AND SLEEP

I was feeling acutely malarial, feverish with pains in my head and my rashes were beginning to infect. Deciding that a splash of water might make me feel better I went off with the missionized man to wash wash. Aware of the ritual involved in this civilized custom I put my towel over my shoulders although I didn't intend to use it. That I was not carrying a bar of soap was rather a breach of protocol.

Millions of white sea shells were embedded in the earth of the path down to the river. Obviously the sea had once covered the site of Bosmun. On reaching the river bank, I realized that the only water to wash in was the stagnant weed-choked Bosmun River. I was reluctant to go down the steep river bank for fear of slipping and soiling my only set of clothes and my missionized friend said he would bring me a bucket of water.

'If you don't wash wash, you are half a pig' he told me.

Determined not to worry about propriety in front of this gentleman and desperate to do something to alleviate the state of my body, I took off all my clothes and with a towel wrapped around my waist, splashed my skin with the tepid, dirty water.

The missionized man was rather taken aback by the fact that I only managed to use half a bucket of water.

Back at the haus man, I set up my sleeping bag and mosquito net on top of a number of *limbum* leaves which the men put down to soften the floor planks. Lying on the floor was uncomfortable and the mosquitoes buzzed outside the net. Seeing that I was not going to get very much sleep, I got up and walked down the length of the men's house to the fire around which some men were sitting. The missionized man offered to boil water for tea and I decided I would give him more money in the morning for his assistance. My cup of tea tasted of the brackish water. Flies and mosquitoes buzzed over it. The men hit at the area over my tin mug to keep the insects away. They talked and swatted the mosquitoes from their bodies. It was almost dark and a man brought me some ripe bananas in an enamel dish which I bought and devoured.

boys arrived from spending the night in the hut of one of Kanong's female relatives who had married a Bosmun man. Bananas were brought for purchase and I gorged them greedily.

### WHITEMEN: ONE TALKS

It was Sunday and the men announced that before they played the flutes, they would have to go to *lotu* (worship in the Catholic church.) Another problem was that according to everyone there was no gasoline to be bought in Bosmun to fuel outboard motors and that even the Brooder had only half a drum. The motor canoe of the local medical orderly was available for hire but he had no gasoline. Why didn't I go see the Brooder, everyone asked me, implying that as we were both Whitemen and therefore 'one talks' he would have an obligation to sell me some. The last thing I wanted to do was to go begging the sale of benzine from a Catholic missionary on a Sunday morning. He was Australian and I was English, I told them. His religion was Catholic while mine was Anglican, Church of England. I had long before given up explaining to New Guineans that I was not a Christian. Most New Guineans had been so affected by the white missionaries who led them in prayer and whose schools they attended that for a whiteman not to be at least a nominal Christian would be incomprehensible to them. After all, Christianity was the ancestral fashion of the whiteman. Having explained these differences in origin and affiliation between the Brooder and myself, I asked them whether they would ask a Highlander to sell them benzine. Both they and the Highlanders were 'one talks' as Papua New Guineans.

They laughed and said that there was one tradestore which had gas and that two gallons would be needed to get to the roadhead at Bonifik. Someone was sent to ask the tradestore owner and the men departed for Mass. The tradestore owner agreed and the medical orderly and I went off to buy gasoline at one kina fifty toya per gallon. The men at the store were most affable. Their relatives were donning their best clothes to go to church.

I walked back to the haus man looking at the abundance of exotic material culture along the way. All the carved objects and house constructions were such an integral part of the culture that after a while one hardly noticed them. The haus man I had slept in was a spectacular feat of bush architecture, the garamuts at its base belonged in a museum but looked better in their natural environment, and every sago plate had carved decoration. Kanong and the four boys were waiting for me around the haus man fire, looking well rested and well fed. Kanong spoke in his slow bass pidgin and told me that to avoid being delayed by the floating rubbish in the Bosman River, the motor canoe would pick us up on the Ramu River, some way further on from the recording site. I bought some drinking coconuts and some bananas which I consumed.



I was told that one man from Bosmun was a university teacher in Ghana and that another one was studying chemistry in London. The usual banal comments seemed to go over quite well. Yes, they had heard from the chemist that England was a very cold place and that you had to wear endless layers of clothing to keep warm. Yes, he had told them that it took three days to go from Papua New Guinea to London on the plane and that when the plane landed you were only allowed to walk around for a short time before going back inside again. London was fullup with people. The chemist had many good friends in London and was teaching them pidgin.

Sleep was almost impossible what with my aching body and the drone of mosquitoes trying to find a way into the net. I noticed a red stain on the net and hoped it was red from stray betel nut juice and not red from my own blood disgorged by a crushed mosquito. Listening to the conversations in the village and all the noises, I stirred underneath the net for hours, only falling into a short, disturbed sleep and waking at first light.

The missionised man brought me some hot water and I drank some foul tasting tea. Kanong and the four

## JUGGLI

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During the bush over my over the cecting m possible eyes cor ground to stacles. I garden hu away upon our

We arring a w looked m below wa the only s bamboo pendent c rail on the tape rec carry over the bridge with every wouldn't because it log and I so I conc and crossed through t file. We a which con formed h rested an working village.

## MIKEIN

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## JUGGLING VALUABLES

When the men came back from Mass we set off: a guide, Kanong, myself, and the kiddies who were beginning to irritate me with their incessant enthusiastic chatter. We descended to the river and got into a dugout which took us somewhat up the opposite bank. The muddy steepness of the bank worried me, so I took the tape recorder from my lap and gave it to Kanong to carry up. On my ascent up the bank I slipped and fell until someone grabbed my arm. The children thought this was hilarious, the great Mastah falls down while climbing up an easy bank, so I tried to laugh with the company.

During the ensuing walk through the bush I carried my tape recorder over my shoulder, my valuables bag over the other, and my umbrella protecting my head, walking as fast as possible with a measured step and eyes constantly directed at the ground to avoid all potential obstacles. I didn't realize that the garden huts were over an hour's walk away and kept expecting to come upon our destination at any moment.

We arrived at a log bridge spanning a wide stream. The single log looked mossy and slippery, the drop below was well over thirty feet, and the only support was a framework of bamboo scaffolding virtually independent of the log which provided a rail on the right hand side. I gave the tape recorder to someone else to carry over and slowly walked across the bridge, checking my balance with every step. The bamboo railing wouldn't be much help if I slipped because it would give way from the log and I would fall down holding it, so I concentrated on the log surface and crossed. Our progress continued through the bush, walking in single file. We arrived at the recording site which consisted of three open platformed huts, places where people rested and cooked food when working gardens distant from the village.

## MIKEING UP: AL FRESCO

A quick reconnoitre of the three houses revealed that there was only one with a roof high enough to accommodate two standing flute players. I began to unpack and set up the recording equipment on a lower platform at one end of the hut determined that I would dazzle the locals with my imported technology and efficiency. I erected the microphone stand worrying that it might be so high that the microphone wires would blow in the wind and put noise on the tapes. Then I plugged the headphones into the tape recorder, screwed the microphone bar on top of the stand, screwed in the two microphones so the fronts were angled together making the isosceles triangle of an estimated recording field, and wired them up to the tape recorder which I put on top of my green plastic cape on the lower platform.

The musicians appeared and took the two flutes out of their individual leaf wrappings. The larger of the pair of Wrangneh was a male and the smaller a female, just like the relative sizes of the Kae'an murups. Sonung and Bahsim would play them. I told the other men and the boys that it would be best if they went and sat in one of the other huts while we recorded so that the noise of talking didn't get on the tapes and they agreed. Sonung and Bahsim washed the bamboo tubes in water to improve their sound quality and began practising while I set the sound levels and adjusted the mikes. It was decided that when I raised my hand they would start playing and that when they had finished they would stop and I would turn off the tape recorder.

The spectators were engaged in their perpetual betel chewing and because I was feeling so exhausted and feverish I decided to try some. Taking the betelnut proffered to me with amusement, I cracked open the green skin with my teeth and ate the white pulp which had the consistency of a dessicated tangerine. It was bitter and covered my teeth with an acid film. I spat it out after several minutes and the only effect I got was increased aggression.

## WINDIM MAMBU

Sonung and Bahsim began playing the Wrangneh. Even to stand up without moving, checking the sound levels, did not diminish the haunting quality of the beautiful music. It sounded like two voices calling to each other, like two bamboo organ pipes following each other. After each piece, I would play a bit back to Sonung and Bahsim and they were amazed by the accuracy of reproduction. They told me the name of each Wrangneh cry which I would write down. Invariably they would say that it was a male initiation tune. The act of recording became very mechanical. At the end of a piece, having written out the details I would ask 'Would you like to play some more cries?'

And they would answer, grinning, 'We've got plenty.'

'OK, you go on, I am only a machine' I told them.

The ground became littered with red plastic tape wrappers. Flying flocks of birds would occasionally break into song. Resting on one foot and then on the other, I glanced at the lines of well spaced coconut palms and the green foliage below them ending somewhere in the distance at the banks of the Ramu. Looking down at the ground I noticed that ants had completely covered my depleted drinking coconut. Under the hut platform was an incongruous roll of metal fencing with a label which I couldn't read. An orange butterfly transversed the area around the equipment and I followed its flight with my eyes as an act of escape.

After the third tape, recording was interrupted by an intense rain-storm. I moved the microphones and wrapped them in my Arab headscarf, covered the tape recorder, headphones and tapes in the plastic cape, and put my unpacked luggage onto the upper platform where I joined the musicians to sit out the rain. Although it was very heavy, everyone took the rain for granted, smoking and chewing buai in the adjacent hut.

Sonung and Bahsim were eating the flesh of a drinking coconut. 'You don't eat very much', one of them said.

'I came here to record your *windim mambu*, not to eat food', I replied haughtily and thinking better of it shared out some dry muesli which they liked and called 'biscuit'.

The downpour stopped abruptly and the earth appeared to dry in minutes. We began recording again and I told them that I would record for as long as they would play. I tired of standing listening intently through the headphones and watched as a man became distant walking off into the green vegetation. I thought that green was the most beautiful colour in the world and marvelled at the number of shades of green I could discern in my field of vision. Occasionally, while playing, Sonung or Bahsim would slap mosquitoes off their bodies and I hoped these noises would not be too audible on the recordings. I had given up bothering about mosquito bites. Let them feast.

## BUSH CUISINE

Some orange dogs skirted the recording hut and a man arrived carrying a string of freshly caught Macau fish. From the corner of my eye, I noticed that the spectators had built a fire over which they were cooking sago paste in a huge beehive-shaped clay pot. The fish would be cooked with sago and I laughed to myself over the seemingly effortless organisation of the after-flute-playing dinner. I thought that Sonung and Bahsim were beginning to tire. Very likely they were hungry. In the middle of the sixth twenty-two minute tape they ended a tune and announced that they had played every kind of cry that they knew.

The medical orderly whose motor canoe was going to take us to Bonifak appeared with one of his songs. He said that they had become famished waiting for us on the river and had consumed nothing but a *julau*, a drinking coconut. As the company sat down to their meal of sago paste and fish, I packed up the recording equipment in the careful manner of someone who didn't want to leave anything behind in a place he was unlikely to return to. The missionised man approached me and said that I was his *poroman*, a pidgin word which I understood to mean close friend, someone who sleeps in your house and eats your food with reciprocal obligations. 'You are my *poroman*. I saw your balls when we went to wash wash.'

## WATCHING THE PATH OF MY FEET

When they had finished eating, I thanked the musicians and men for a final time and Kanong, the boys, the medical orderly and I departed for the motor canoe on yet another bush walk. All bush walks in this region were beginning to look the same to me. This was from the perspective of someone watching the path of their feet. Cleared garden land and fallow bush, the occasional stream to cross, and open grass lands with a burning sun. I was spared close observation by the conversation of the medical orderly, one of those go-ahead New Guinea entrepreneurs. Had I seen his roll of fencing under the recording hut. He was going to make a pig enclosure, a very big one. Instead of fencing off a small area and having to give the pigs food, he was going to fence off a large area of bush and the pigs could forage for their own food.

My main concern was that we got to the Bonifak roadhead where I optimistically assumed that there would be a vehicle going to Bogia that would deliver me into the tender ministrations of the Bogia hotel, running kiaps and their 20 kina per night rooms.

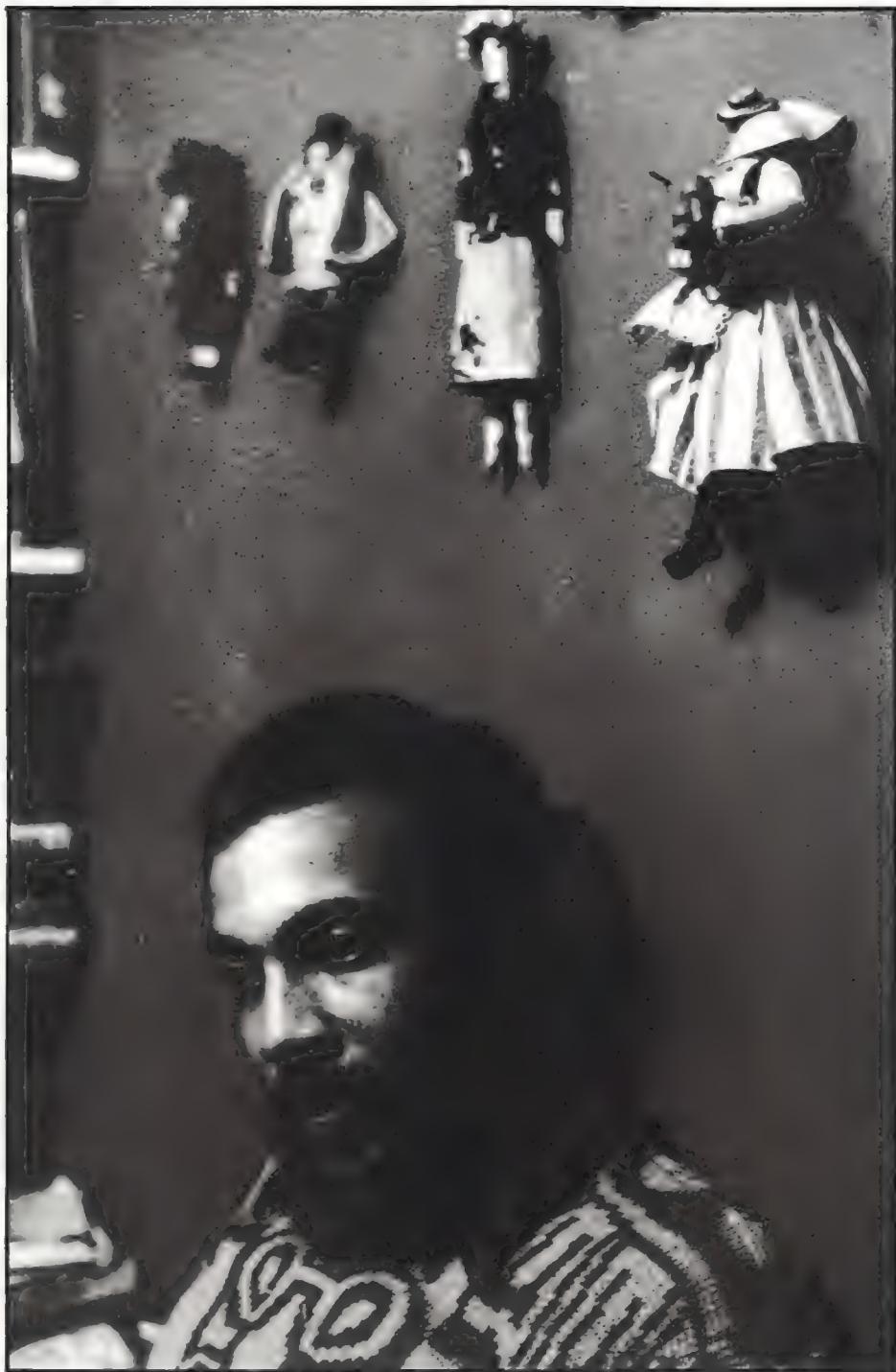
When we got to the mooring of the motor canoe, the bank down to the Ramu was so absolute that I could hardly see it. Kanong and the medical orderly effortlessly carried my cargo down to the canoe. Anticipating my difficulties, Kanong cut a walking stick for me with his bush knife. I entertained myself by imagining that I was an infirmed 19th century explorer of Africa being assisted down to the river boat by his faithful native retainer. With the walking stick the descent was easy.

The journey up the Ramu to Bonifak past reed beds and people fishing from dugouts, took what seemed to be a relatively short time. We landed, Kanong took my cargo up to a roofed platform, I paid the medical orderly, and he drove off in his motor canoe. While negotiating a drinking coconut, I lost sight of Kanong and the boys and asked where they were. 'I think they have gone', I was told. I looked down the dirt road to see some figures retreating in the distance. By the dirty green shorts and shirt, I could tell that the tallest one was Kanong. I wished that I had said goodbye to him.



# BÄBI MUSIC

## Milford Graves Interview



photographs by Valerie Wijmer

PB *What do you spend your time thinking about?*

MG How unlimited music is and how do you deal with music other than the way it is dealt with today, from the musical point of producing music as well as a survival point.

*Survival?*

I mean how do we do, what we do, and how we can economically be rewarded. I find it's necessary to not have a money problem so that you can creatively be involved in your music . . . that's not the only thing I think about, but I think it's an important thing I think about.

*How about the context in which the music happens, how do you think that affects the economics?*

I want to be involved in a situation that may be invitation only—I don't know at this particular time if this would mean a money type of involvement. What I want to generate again is a meeting of musicians without an audience, so musicians can really start to focus in on what the music is about again, instead of doing something that people may like.

*Focussing on the music again?*

Yeah, because I don't see that happening too much anymore. Everybody's too busy trying to be very external in the sense of forming a band or just making money from public performances.

*Do you think this is because of economic pressure?*

Yes, definitely. And I think the music is really suffering and is not moving in the direction that it could move. I'm playing a lot with Hugh Glover, I guess he's one of the veterans that's still left. I've been doing a lot of solos lately. I decided to keep a low profile during the last few years 'cos I didn't think that the music was going in the direction that I really wanted to go into.

After every revolutionary movement or new happening in the music a few people are picked to be the so-called "stars" of the music and I didn't think I was going to be one of the people that was picked. So that's when I decided that instead of hanging onto the scene, and doing this gig and that gig, I should just retire a little bit from the scene and just focus on what I personally was about, and what the music scene was about, and what direction I should take.

*What is the music about?*

I haven't come to any conclusion yet, I have no definition. I just try to see what music has been about already, and I have looked at it from the spiritual as well as the scientific basis, from the feeling good aspect, something to make you feel good, to the scientific approach of notes and scales, modes, rhythms and so on. It led me into all kinds of different studies. I always had

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# Milford Graves talks to Paul Burwell in New York

If you live in England, you're likely to know Milford Graves through his records, because although he's played all over the rest of the world, he's never appeared here.

Even so, his playing has had an enormous influence on musicians involved in improvised music. The legendary albums with Don Pullen (on their own label), the extraordinary Albert Ayler album 'Love Cry' (on Impulse), the two New York Art Quartet albums, the Giuseppe Logan E.S.P.s, all date from the mid to late sixties, and are required listening.

More recently, his work with Japanese musicians (including Toshinori Kondo) and his American friends ('Babi Music'—again on a musician-run label), has demonstrated his continual commitment to change and development, his extraordinary drumming skills and his revolutionary approach to the function of the drummer, and of rhythm.

diagrams from the cover of BABI MUSIC

photos by VAL WILMER

HARMONIC

MIDDLE

ADAWURAA KOFI MA WO HOMENE  
cause yourself to arise gong

AS THE GREATEST TERM IS TO THE LEAST, SO IS  
THE DIFFERENCE OF THE GREATEST AND THE MIDDLE,  
TO THE DIFFERENCE OF THE MIDDLE AND THE LEAST  
TERM

were saying things no different from what I was saying to myself . . . general statements . . . and I said, "If this is the case, then I'm going to look at music as something to make me a little bit more aware of how to enhance these feelings that I'm personally receiving. And if I can make myself feel very positive and in good health and in good spirits then I automatically will make people feel good." I had to satisfy myself first.

You said that the music is going in a wrong direction at present. Why is this?

The music will always be an inner voice, a reflection of what's going on, on a total basis. If we look around, we see that music is moving just like everything else is moving, like technology is moving. Some things are happening to us beyond what I can grasp, I find it difficult a lot of times to come to any conclusion why certain things happen; you can just observe, and see the effect of certain things. If I go to downtown Manhattan, into a real industrial district, and I start coughing and my eyes start burning, I know something's not right. If I come across some good air, I breathe it and I appreciate it. Music has the same effect. We know as a musician, or we're supposed to know, when we're hitting the right spot or not.

I think the problem is that we have a lot of musicians today that are so mechanically trained that they're very insensitive to what music is supposed to be about. The methods that Pythagoras used to come to his

conclusions about intervals were based on Math, arithmetic, and number, and he completely left the ear out. We have many musicians trained today that have no understanding of what we are about, about the biological system. A lot of people train by repetition, without any feeling of what they do. These types of musicians are definitely insensitive to what I am saying. Also, there are people that are totally not musicians, who are business people, who realise that they can make money out of music. They listen to a hit record and they try to work to the same concept. Can we talk about your instruments? This is your standard set-up, bass, hi hat, cymbal, floor tom, top tom ex-snare drum?

Yes

And you travel with this kit?

Yes, but not for long, though.

I'm getting ready to put something else together.

Similar, or radically different?

I think it's going to be a little different—quite different. (Laughs)

Is that because you've been working on specific musical things that have led you to different objects?

There's two reasons. I think I've fully expressed what I had to do on this kit, and the second reason is that the techniques I use are different from the average trap or jazz drummer, but people still see me as a trap player.

Traps were designed for a specific type of music and if you're not playing that sort of music there's no reason to stick to a standard kit.

Exactly. I'll tell you how I actually started playing trap drums. I primarily was involved with African and Caribbean percussion. During '60 '62, I had formed a band with Chick Corea on piano, with bass, alto, congas and myself. I also had another band that used to play for weekend dances in the community, and at times people would say "We want to hear a little Jazz or something, not just Latin" so . . . I had timbales and a cymbal and I had to sit down and

play a little Janga-jang, Janga-jang, or give them a little back beat. I always knew that. Growing up in a black community you knew a little jazz or back beat or rock beat or something . . . and I would just be stomping the floor, 'cos I didn't have no set, and some people would tell me "Man, you got a feeling for jazz, you should be playing the trap drum set", and I would say, "Well, I don't want to play that, man, 'cos the drums is too limited. I get more free-time playing the other way, it's more exciting for me."

We started playing opposite some of the Latin bands, and we started getting better known, but one thing started happening that kind of turned me off—if you weren't Latin, you just didn't get no gigs! . . . You see I had a Latin band with no Latins in it. So I started thinking there were a lot of people telling me I should play jazz drums, I wasn't getting too many gigs Latin-wise, so I borrowed a friend's drum kit and I'd go home and I would be on this kit from early in the morning to late at night. This was in '62, and a year and a half later I was in the 'October Revolution'. People were surprised that I had only been on traps for two years, but I had in fact been playing stick drums all my life. When I played timbales or congas, I used to stand up a lot and I used to dance, so when I went to the trap drum set I just danced on my bass drum and hi-hat. It was like a social thing which led me to the traps, it was to do with getting a gig!

When did you start stripping it down, removing all front and bottom heads and so on?

I'm trying to remember if it was by accident, or if I knew what I was doing . . . I remember—you always discover things by accident. I always had a problem of transportation—I don't drive.

So you took the heads off and put the drums inside each other, yeah?

Yes! I took them apart and I used to go on the train. You know, when I first took the bottom heads off and hit the drums I said, "WOW, this is where it's at . . . now I've got a nice big sound." It was like the difference between talking with your hand over your mouth or not.

studied world music, but I really dealt with it in a more in-depth way. I really got involved and it just improved me as a musician.

I've looked at music from Pythagorean concepts to people like Kepler. It's still a question—what really is music? I mean we know what music can do just by talking to people who listen to it—talking to a musician is another thing. The conclusion I came to was that these people



I have a bass drum pedal I designed; I haven't rushed with it—if someone puts the concept out before me, beautiful. But I want to patent it because I feel when it comes out, some opportunist drum manufacturer will jump on it real fast. Personally I feel it's a hell of an idea—they tried it on Italian drums on the tom, Oh, tonal control—the Hollywood foot-tensioned floor tom.

The thing about that one, though, was that the foot pedal was only used to change the tension on the head. Now, the pedal I've made, you have to have the whole drum to go with it, 'cos there's a whole mechanism I've put together. I'm just putting the finishing touches to it now. What happens is, when I'm playing on the bass drum pedal, I can get two different things happening: while the beater's hitting the skin, I can change the tension at the same time, with the same foot. I can get like a talking drum thing.

*How much tonal control can you get out of your bass drum with a normal pedal?*

I can get a lot, according to how flexible the head is and how good the pedal is, because I use a lot of muting techniques. For instance, there's a certain way I hit the skin whilst it's still vibrating without dampening, and it actually stops the vibration.

*Like a double beat?*

Yeah.

*Have you used foot pedals on other things—gongs or whatever?*

Yes, definitely. It's just that I've been trying to make the drums a little more flexible. Here it was a social thing, it was a way of participating with other musicians. If you're by yourself you can go as far as you want. But the way I was playing, a lot of musicians wouldn't hire me, just playing the kit! But when I do solos, I can do what I want to do.

*All musicians talk about how they want to feel good from their playing, and make other people feel good, but quite often people don't respond. Like you said, sometimes other musicians wouldn't hire you because of your playing, so, you've got a split between what you know works and other people's non-acceptance. How have you dealt with that?*

Well, what I've been doing primarily, since I've been at Bennington College, is research into the music. There is a branch of the Institute of Percussive Studies which Andrew Cyrille, Hugh Glover and myself, the Direc-

tors of the Institute, have been involved in: a project called 'Physiological and Psychological Effects of Sound'. What I was interested in was how could you produce a music that would be considered non-commercial, but do the same thing that commercial music is trying to do. You can do something that the intellect would call very avant-garde or very experimental, but at the same time get the same kind of response from people that one of the super rock groups could get—people tearing their hair and screaming.

What I would say about music other than folk or commercial music (and commercial music comes a lot from folk forms)—folk music is for me sounds and rhythm in their most simple form that are stimulating. That's why Rock music, no matter how much you put it down, is working within that area of safe sounds that automatically stimulate people. I think that when you get out of the rock area into classical music, no matter what culture it's from, any music that is scientifically or intellectually developed, then you are getting in touch with areas, you're starting to experiment with things that are not on the safe side. Then you have to have a hell of a knowledge about societies, about psychology, physics, about the whole nature of sound. That's what led me into the study. With the new music, avant garde, we were doing things that you might personally think were great, but may be very harmful to people.. we never tested these things!

Let me tell you about the '60s. The '60s were a laboratory—in the '70s you weren't supposed to make the same mistakes! People who went from the avante-garde to playing Blues or Be-Bop weren't selling out—the '60s was a time when a lot of musicians found out what they were able to do, and a lot of people found out it was better for them to be playing what we call 'tunes', or go back into something that had been established for a long time—modal playing and things.

Musicians were very fortunate in the '60s; people paid them to be experimented on. If it had been a research programme, we would have been paying the audience, so we could study the effects of the sounds!

*Has your music changed since then?*

My music? Definitely. I don't know if I've produced a music that I definitely wanted to produce—I think it's going to start happening now, because the things I want to do take a lot of involvement.

One of the things I saw happen in the '60s I thought was very detrimental was, like, you may play, for some reason other, something that may be called 'Art' or different music, and you have no training whatsoever in the conventional way of playing, and you get to a point in your development when someone comes to you and says: "You don't know what's happening, man, 'cos you can't play this, and you can't play that." And the person is just psychologically wiped out—from critics or whatever else just wrecking them. And this person is at the point when they should really be developing their art, and it never gets developed because they say, "Well, I've got to go back and learn that that other stuff". That was really dangerous for a lot of musicians who were really starting to develop a new kind of music, a new way to approach the music.

I was talking to a young trumpet player. When he used to play, a lot of traditional players used to flip over what he did, but they started changing when they found out that he didn't read music and he really didn't know no tunes. I said to him: "You know, man, you have a natural approach to that trumpet! You got good trumpet players shook up! You hit on something—you don't even know what you hit on! You shouldn't play with no Be-Boppers, don't play with none of those guys 'cos that's not your bag—all they're going to do is destroy your mind—there's guys waiting to psychologically wipe you out, 'cos they're uptight on what you're doing—don't give them no excuse, you're too sensitive, you won't be able to take that". The biggest error of his life was when he tried to learn tunes. I said: "What you should do is try to figure out your concept, write some papers, put out some accepted method books—make your thing happen! Make your thing be accepted."

*One thing that characterises your playing is your understanding of a drum as an object, a membrane stretched across a resonator, obeying certain physical laws. That it is malleable, these physical laws can be exploited to alter tone and pitch.*

Exactly.

*Your concern with drums as objects is evidenced by the fact that you have decorated your kit by painting the shells, but you've also painted a circle on the top tomtom head.*

No, that's just something that the Indians use.

*Oh, tuning paste!*

Yeah. Nigerians use it also, for improving the tone.

*I've never seen anyone do that on a kit before.*

When you're looking for tone quality, fundamental tone and all its sisters and brothers and cousins, the overtones, with a new head you have to find its vibrational pattern, its dead patches. Using paste will either deaden or heighten certain frequencies. I'm doing that within the skin, within certain areas. People talk about sympathetic vibrations coming off the skin, but the same thing happens within, in different areas. I listen to every part of the skin. With a new head I work around it, hitting it to a geometrical pattern which I follow so that I'm certain I've hit every part of the skin.

*How about plastic heads?*

I don't really like plastic heads, they develop too many little wells in them.\*

*Wells?*

Depressions. I call them 'wells' because I relate the drum skin to a body of water. I heavily relate to that. Someone may ask me why.

*Why?*

Well, here's an experiment you can do. Take a TV or Video screen, brighten up the blank screen as much as you can, tune a drum low, hit it and hold it between you and the cathode ray tube, which gives you a strobe effect, and you can actually see the vibrations.

*In the Science Museum in San Francisco, in the Exploratorium, there is an exhibit—a horizontal speaker cone has a thin rubber sheet, etched with radii and concentric circles stretched across it. The cone is driven by a variable strobe. You set the rubber vibrating by activating the tone generator and changing the frequency, and you can slow the movements or freeze the movement by changing the speed of the strobe.*

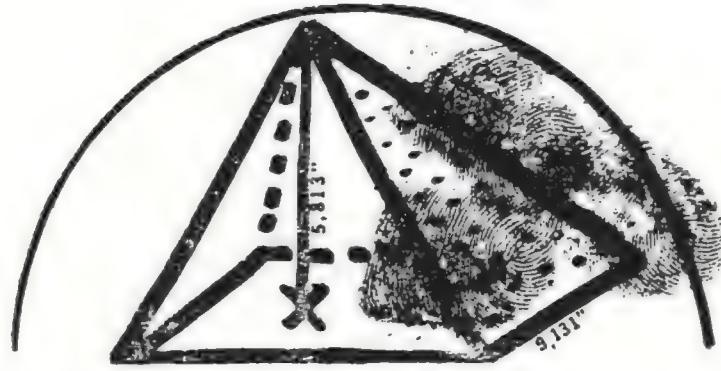
It looks like an ocean.

*That's right. How about other playing surfaces, like wood and metal-cymbals and gongs?*

I think I have to move out of that area, I mean they'll be there—I've been thinking about these things for years, but I didn't want to come out publicly ..

I do a lot of strength training, internal training, similar to *Kundalini* Yoga and various oriental techniques. Also techniques that are utilised by sports medicine today, a lot of athletic things, because when I do a lot of things with the cymbal . . . this is something that can't be written about, but can sure be demonstrated

(demonstrates various techniques for playing cymbals incorporating slow muting, slow bending, grasping and bending cymbal with arm whilst still playing with sticks . . . he talks about the amount of pressure he uses to



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MILFORD GRAVES and HUGH GLOVER



bend cymbals and worries about breaking them—justifiably, if the state of the hi hat cymbals is any indication).

Do you ever use any bows?

Bows? No, I never used a bow, I never wanted to use a bow. In one sense it was too easy for me, I wanted to get sounds from other ways. I know the bow is a big thing in Europe.

I work with speed a lot—not to show I've got fast chops, but to get from one thing to another. If you hear something of mine it sounds slower than it would look, because I'm doing five things to get one sound. I've realised that the drumkit is making me work harder than I need to . . . some guy comes along with an electronic instrument, presses a button and it goes *Whoop do weee oo!* . . . and I have to bust my ass to

get that sound.

I dig electronics for what they are, but my feeling is that I haven't worked enough on my internal self to get the sound I want, I want to get something out of it as well; I want to get the satisfaction that I was really able to create something, not just a turn a switch—not just internal satisfaction, but for what we can do as people, just ourselves.

How did the performances in Europe go?

In Europe I played on the same bill with Paul Lytton, Frank Perry and Sven Johannson. Frank and I had solo nights. Frank just about emptied the hall, Paul did about the same, some people left on Johannson, but not many. Paul asked me why I handed out instruments to the audience during my performance. He couldn't understand that. He said,

"I can understand you going out into the audience playing, but not handing out instruments." He also told me he expects people to leave when he plays, and I thought to myself, "Why do you come out and play?"

I have three basic approaches, three reasons for playing: When I play by myself, I don't have nobody to contend with but myself. The other way is playing with other musicians—musicians stimulating musicians. The third way is musicians playing to people. When you go out and play for an audience, they're coming to you for some help. A musician is like a doctor, a psychologist.

When people come to a concert, they want you to feed them, they want you to make them feel good. You ask the average person why they like music, they say it makes them feel good, they want to dance, it makes them happy, forget their problems.

I said, as a musician you have to understand that. I said: "Paul, the music you want to do, the sounds you want to create with your set up, I use that in what I call my clinical set up, in medical music, from a therapeutic point. That's where I use straight out sounds. That has its place, but to walk up to people in a concert hall," I said, "you're going to irritate people! It's like taking one medicine and saying it's good for every person. It doesn't work like that. Everybody wants a broad spectrum, the all-purpose thing. Music can do that. You can reach a great percentage of people. When you're emptying a place of 95% of the people, something's wrong; something's not working right. If I'm going to take the initiative and go out and perform in front of an audience knowing from past experience that I irritate people and empty the hall out, then I have to think what I'm about."

But that must have happened to you... Back in the '60s?

No! It never happened! My experience was greatly different in this music. I came up playing for dancers—dancers to watch and social dances, so I always knew how to stimulate people. I learnt types of rhythms that would make people respond. Some musicians used to say: "It ain't about playing for people 'cos they don't know what they want." But I said: "Let's cut out all this class bag, because when it comes down to basics we are all alike. We can be very simple, it's only when we get into this make-believe world that we think we are above other people." By playing a lot of dance music when I was young, I wanted to make a living playing music, and the bands I was with, we used to work like mad to get hired again, and that meant knowing how to organise your music to get it across, and learnt that. Even when I started playing with all those guys in the '60s I never really got bad reviews, I always used to get across even with the so-called avant-garde groups like Albert Ayler. People used to respond to me when people didn't want to deal with Albert, but I always shaped my rhythms to capture people's attention.

As a musician, you are schooling yourself to deal with some of the most sensitive things in the universe: emotion, frequency, life, the vital force. We're deal that, that's what musicians are supposed to be! Musicians aren't supposed to be depressed and irritable and walking around with an attitude, or outright nasty. We're supposed to be the most brilliant things out . . . brilliant in the sense of illumination. We're supposed to glow and light up, very cool, man . . . nothing can disturb us.

We're involved with one of the most subtle thing in life—SOUND—that's it!

#### Footnotes

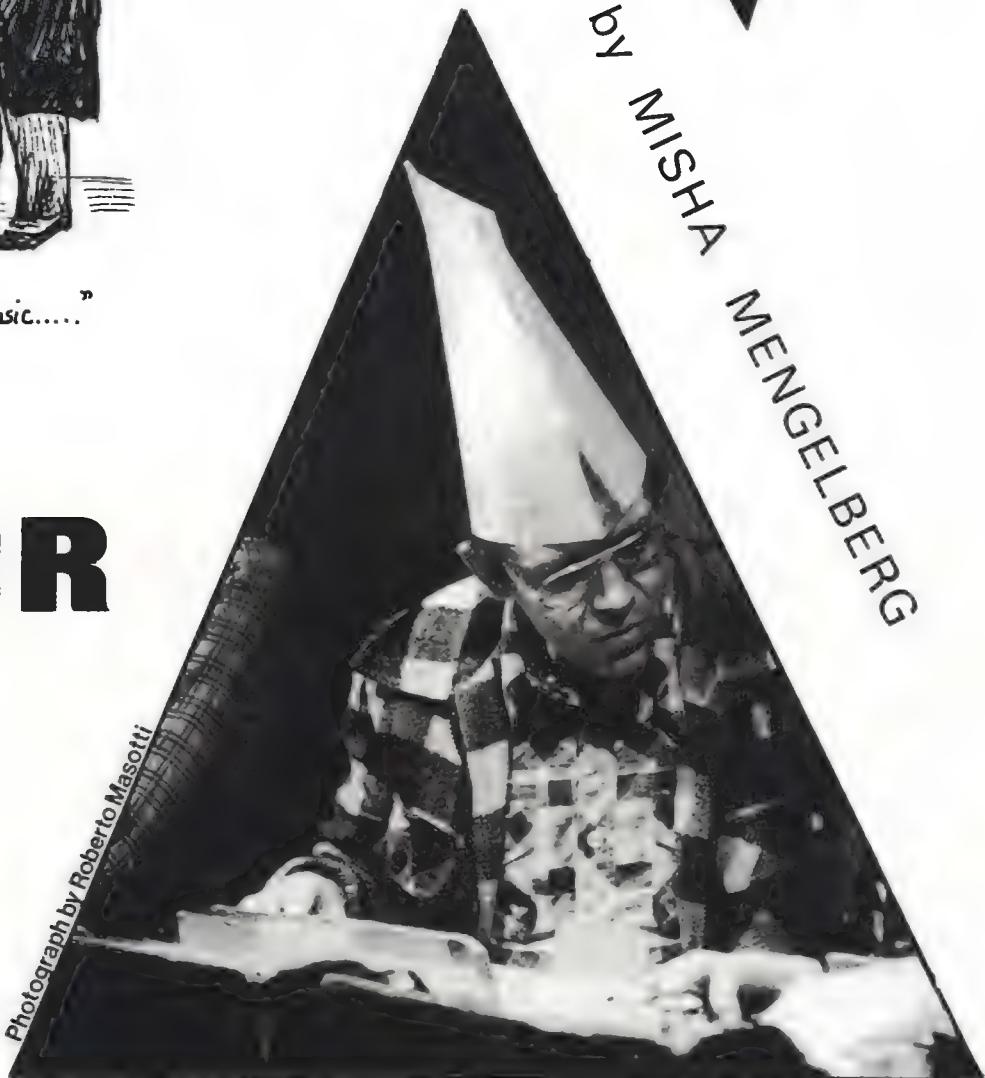
\*You can remove these little dents by carefully heating them with a lighted cigarette.



"....even education in light music....."

# CHOIR OF PRESERVATION

Photograph by Roberto Masotti



Teaching of music

by MISHA MENGELEBERG

Drawings by Gibel

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Not for nothing are conservatoires called conservatoires.

The essence of what goes on there is extremely well characterised by the concept conserve.

Musical craft is the result of intensive training, where techniques developed over long periods are handed down and practised.

Most of these techniques—instrumental, theoretical and didactic—are, by their very nature, reproductive.

Reproductive of historical and didactic knowledge, of tone and interval, of structure, of musical composition by more or less patented masters—that's what it's about.

Also categories such as baroque music, the newest music, light or electronic, are tackled by reproductive methods, where—absolutely no need to exclude it—much inventiveness can be indulged to find connections between old tried techniques and musical problems designated as new.

An exception to this chorus of preservation is the composition class, and maybe a workgroup of improvisers-to-be.

Here also, reproduction and duplication are very much the order of the day, but not exclusively.

In these cases an appeal to productive forces cannot be denied.

It appears that the approaches of music education institutions in the above outline seem somewhat negative—are criteria such as productive and reproductive really so important as is being suggested?

And why should reproduction be so wrong and production so right!

Don't we learn by following examples, by the acquisition of knowledge and by the application of tested techniques? Certainly that cannot be denied.

And further, everyone must decide for themselves what they will do with their learning. The conservatoire doesn't exist to demand self expression from everyone, but to help every student, if possible, to the kind of education for which s/he feels the need.

And then 95% of musical practice consists of reproduction—our musical inheritance would lead a shadowy existence if the medium of interpretation was not available to bring it to life.

In spite of these reassuring statements on behalf of the status quo a couple of details remain a little hazy.

Kees van Baren\* used to assume that improvisation was something that could not be taught—moreover he couldn't bear the thought of all those studious horn players, school musicians and piano ladies suddenly turning to improvisation. What mediocre drivel that would produce.

The question I never asked him but which, at the time, hung very much in the air was: "Composition, then, can that be taught?"

A simple answer to this last question cannot be given, but the above assumption was expressed in the composition class and from my side I would like to suppose that improvisation can be regarded as not previously notated composition.

As regards all those horn players, school musicians and piano ladies—who began life as happy improvisers until their parents and tutors forbade any further noise in their cots and urgently recommended them to go to sleep—

They were not at all mediocre drivellers, but but frustrated toddlers on the road to civilization: later tamed by recorder and piano lessons and finally pestered into the conservatoires by jubilant aunts. It is therefore of no surprise that here the

means of stimulating one's own musical grammar and syntax were not called for. Furthermore, the conservatoire is not prepared for this question. As much as the tamed horn-players-to-be, this institution is a product of a civilization that values initiative and judgement less than functioning according to given patterns.

Aside from the importance of criteria such as 'reproductive' and 'productive', for the continuation of this argument it matters how far the realization of these concepts in education responds to questions raised by society in 1981.

If conservatoire products are of society, and reflect social relationships—how can it be that while society has changed virtually unrecognizably in the last 70 years, the conservatoires in the days of Zweers and Dopper\* are not in principle different from that of Van Vlijmen?

Is music a fossil art form?

Or have all the world wars, revolutions, ecological disasters, wastages of energy and raw materials produced much less change than is usually supposed?

Be that as it may, I thought her ideas on piano lessons were brilliant. I wondered—why don't all piano teachers give lessons like that? There is nothing more exhilarating for a player of an instrument than to think of playing your own music.

As it turned out these thoughts were not at all commonly accepted in the conservatoire where I ended up at that time.

On the contrary—with serious professional training a completely different set of objects holds sway.

Around the same time I came into contact with jazz and jazz musicians. In these circles the question whether someone had attended conservatoire or not was of little relevance. One either played fantastic, or one didn't swing at all!

The examples of jazz did not live in Holland but in North America (except Don Byas—although he stayed here primarily for the sport fishing and kept his music for other lands).

The only possible ways of learning were listening to records, frequenting concerts by Americans, visiting jazz clubs to jam

".... piano ladies suddenly turning to improvisation."



In the 50s, if I was in Paris, I used to visit Bep Guijer. Bep had moved to the 'City of Light' in 1922 in order to escape the oppressive atmosphere of married life in Utrecht. (Sundays in Utrecht still seem somewhat chastening).

She became a composition student of Koechlin\* and over the years built up a teaching practise where her piano pupils, children of between six and fourteen, wrote their own pieces.

Bep helped her pupils to work their ideas out, write them down and then to play them. This was the major part of her teaching method.

The results were introduced to myself, and friends I had brought along, with wine and cheese (du fromage et du pain—produit de la France—please repeat six times in stately manner).

We suspected that Bep had had a hand in them because the pieces all possessed the same simple melodious elegance so typical of the Hollando-Gaulish spirit of our hostess.

with other Dutchers who tried to play jazz and, naturally, self study.

In the '60s I began to get sick and tired of that unceasing swing—were there no impulses to find an acceptable form of improvising in Amsterdam and districts?

And if yes—what forms should these improvisations take? The, till then, established melody variation forms did not seem appropriate for giving structure to the latest ideas.

Fortunately in the Netherlands and elsewhere there were a number of colleagues who agreed and who were able to experiment together. These friends came from the worlds of visual art, brass bands and jazz. Naturally the conservatoires played not a single role in these developments—the didactic answer to jazz was not yet up for discussion.

In the '70s, most professional training institutes changed their outward appearance somewhat; the 19th century front view underwent a 20th century facelift where electronic studios, student/staff consulta-

tion, authentic baroque departments were instituted and even education in light music saw life.

This is wholly consistent with the model of our present parliamentary democracy, where the room to manoeuvre to change normal procedures is pretty small, and where developments are always followed at a safe distance and consequently have hardly any effect on them.

That this has led to gigantic social problems can be taken as understood—if our form of society is to survive in the coming years then it will be, at its very least, the consequence of changes in the areas of mentality, patterns of consumption, education and the effective control of our economic mechanisms.

As far as the school is concerned it is very much the question whether, against this background, the cramming procedures, the piling up of all sorts of knowledge and the assessment systems which give 10 out of 10 for adjusted behaviour and 1 out of 10 for non-adjusted, can be maintained unaltered.

Perhaps one of the answers related to the necessary change in mentality is a greater attention in schools to the learning of independent investigation and action by individuals, and the creation of conditions for the cultivation of critical powers and self knowledge.

To function is beautiful but to function critically is better.

How can a reasonably democratic balance of views be achieved when people have not been able to develop their critical faculties?

Independent thinking can be learnt, but only step by step and the sooner the better.

*"Whatever influences and models are used within this own music are the responsibility of the maker."*



If we apply the above line of thought to musical education it means that music students will, throughout their education, have to learn to subject the learnt to their own criteria. They will have to learn to understand their own personal relationship to that learnt, or, in other words, to use their 'own music' as criteria for what is offered.

Whether this own music is notated, improvised, presented in rough scraps or exists only as vague notions, it must be there as a conscience.

It is senseless to suppose that every musician should actually be a composer. (Fortunately the average healthy musician doesn't possess the exhibitionist bluntness necessary to this category of childish people).

Furthermore it is the question whether that own music should be made into a separate subject by means of a composition and/or improvisation class.

One can better think in terms of an instruction which incorporates this own music into existing disciplines like general musical knowledge, theoretical subjects and instrumental lessons.

This instruction should not be formalised lest it become reproducible once again.

As little as one's conscience can be reproduced, so own music cannot be accomplished via reproductive methods.

Whatever influences and models are used within this own music are the responsibility of the maker.

What remains for individual tutors is their willingness to stimulate the students' own music in an informal way, and to relate this to possibilities offered by the disciplines in the school.

This all to strengthen the possibilities of individual productivity and finally to make the reproductive processes more controllable and fruitful.

A lot of hard thinking will be necessary and many risks will have to be taken, in order for music education to seriously grasp this part answer to 20th century problems.

I am very conscious that my handling of the subject is far from complete—the beginning of the story seems fairly sharp, then there are a few anecdotes and at the end a somewhat jargonised outpouring. It nevertheless seems to me that the above is worthy of consideration.

If this essay should help towards the promotion of production (in whatever form) as part of musical education then the hares will have to take serious note that tortoises are formidable sprinters.

Translated from the Dutch original by Peter Cusack with much assistance from Marian van de Waals

\*Kees van Baren (1906-70), composer and teacher, was/is a key figure in Dutch musical life. As Director of Utrecht Conservatoire (53-57) and then The Hague Conservatoire (58-70) he was instrumental in shaping a large part of current thinking in music, particularly towards music teaching. Many of his students, including Misha Mengelberg, are amongst the most active and best known musicians/composers of the present generation in the Netherlands. Misha speaks very warmly of the way his classes would be based entirely around composition brought in by students for discussion and not on any fixed syllabus or formal instruction.

\*Zweers and Dopper were composers and conservatoire directors in the Netherlands at the beginning of the century. Jan van Vlijmen is also a composer and the current director of the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague.

\*Koechlin was a French composer and teacher who achieved some fame in the early 30s. A prolific writer, he produced many large scale works, including symphonic poems on Kipling's Jungle Book and the Seven Stars symphony based on the characters of seven film stars—Douglas Fairbanks, Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich and Charlie Chaplin amongst others.



# SILENCE is a rhythm too



GOING DOWN IN STYLE —

## ESQUERITA

If coiffure were a deciding factor for enrolment to the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame then Esquerita would certainly be in there with the stars. Esquerita, otherwise known as Eskew Reeder, was used by Capitol Records towards the end of the '50s as an attempt to steal some of Little Richard's thunder. Where Richard mixed relentlessly passionate singing and piano playing, a terrific backbeat and chilling possessed eyes, Esquerita threw together a voice of approximate pitch and timing, wildly chaotic piano and a disappointingly tame band. Many of the songs are blatant rip-offs ('Good Golly Annie May', 'I'm Battie Over Hattie') and a flamboyant imitation of the Little Richard Whoop seems more obession than gimmick.

Nevertheless, Mr. Reeder was not without his charms. 'Esquerita and the Voola' employs the whoop solely—a white-sheet ghost-track laid over an absurdly belligerent crash cymbal creating an effect which may be anti-song but is decidedly pro-atmosphere. So little appears to be known about the man that it's impossible to classify such bizarre efforts; a serious connection with his New Orleans background and an inevitable experience of Vodoun or just rock 'n' roll silliness? The New Orleans links between Esquerita, Little Richard and Larry Williams—the drive to merge the daft with the demonic—are very clear. Whether Esquerita enjoyed the same hot and cold relationship with the Lord (or was it the Devil?) as Richard is impossible to say though those ubiquitous gospel roots surface in the pure Church piano intro of Buddy Holly's loser's lament 'Maybe Baby', recorded by Reeder in 1959.

I suppose it has to be said—Esquerita's music left a lot to be desired. With a backing band of like souls things might have been different but the discrepancies on the Capitol sides—the spirited incompetence of the leader fighting the mediocrity of his band—defeat their potential as anthems of disorder. They flopped.

by DAVID TOOP

1962 saw him create a minor buzz in New Orleans with an organ instrumental—'Green Door' (England had to suffer a Frankie Vaughan version) and in 1965 he was produced by Allen Toussaint on 'I Done Woke Up'. There the file seems to close.

If Esquerita seems justifiably obscure then spare a thought for style. If the lasting musical significance was weak the devotion to inspired sartorial vulgarity was certainly willing. Reeder sported the tallest hair-do of its time (for a man, anyway), topping off Edna Everage rhinestone-studded shades, tasteless lace-ribbed shirts and a battery of jewellery-type fixtures and fittings. Where other 'created images' of rock 'n' roll have cracked through age, alcoholism, over-eating, drugs or indifference Esquerita's seamless tackiness will live on.



by  
Vivien  
Goldman

Now, silence is our greatest weapon.

For a long time, softness, silence, moments of stillness, those traditional attributes of womanhood, have been scorned and discarded in Western rock and pop. Insistent struts and shouts, a rigid rhythm have formed the bedrock. Sounds like bludgeons to cudgel the listener.

Our ears have become attuned to male registers, and just as many men shie away from voices in a higher register ('screeching')—the reason why Margaret Thatcher had to have her voice retrained as part of her please-the-patriarchy grooming process—and girls are told that the proper place for a voice is 'soft, gentle and low—an excellent thing in woman'—Shakespeare's Cordelia in *King Lear*.

People are always curious about whether women will make a different music. In the past few years, groups like the Raincoats and Girlschool have proved that women can play it any way they want; but there is some shift—women are opening windows in the musty room of rock—and the breeze that blows in is the greatest hope for much-needed change.

Fashion enters into it too: skirts zoom up and down, waists appear and are banished to the hips, ears become de-sensitized to the thrill of a particular sound or rhythm, for more than simple commercial reasons. Points that were once best made by NOISE are now reinforced by quiet.

It's nothing new—holes put half the fun in funk. PiL shifting away from bass combined with drums as the *sine qua non* of dance music suddenly illuminates that old 4/4 rhythm section as a too-tight monopoly; Alison Stratton in the Young Marble Giants, Ana and Gina in the Raincoats, Debbie in Current Obsessions, break another tyranny—that for the voice to be forceful, it must be LOUD.

Dale Spender's book, *Man Made Language* (Routledge and Kegan Paul), especially the chapter 'The Dominant and the Muted', adds a lot to this argument, dealing with the inaudibility and invisibility of women as part of the patriarchy's process of constructing women's silence: 'It is my belief that if women were to gain a public voice, they would in many instances supply very different meanings from those which have been provided and legitimated by males'.

# Calypso music will never ~~die~~ DIE!

## Last night.....

Last night, Saturday the 14th of March, The GI's Brass International presented a Calypso Show at Carnival City, Basseterre, St Kitts. The Brass have recently returned, covered in a certain amount of glory, from the Trinidad Carnival. They brought with them Blue Boy, The Trinidad Carnival's 'Road March King', whose latest album, 'Socah in the Shaolin Temple', is currently best selling all over the Caribbean. A calypso singer of great verve and style with a reputation for notoriety, his entry for the 1980 Calypso Contest, 'Socah Baptist', poked gentle fun at Trinidad's Baptists, and brought down sufficient wrath upon his head from this powerful sect, to lead to it being banned from the contest. This didn't prevent the song from topping the charts for months.

Blue Boy topped the bill, but the GI's opened the show with the kind of driving and well balanced performance we have come to expect. They gave us plenty of Socah and a dose of reggae, as well as providing the backing for Blue Boy and a line-up of local performers, calypsonians such as Ranger, King Sweeny, and Turkey, and a couple of Kittian soul singers. The audience thoroughly enjoyed themselves, applauding the political jokes and joining in the choruses. The rain which had been promising to fall all evening held off (Carnival City is strictly open air), and the Inability-To-Organize-Piss-Ups-In-Breweries Syndrome, which sometimes blights these shows did not make its presence felt; even / understood some of Calypso Reggie's (the compere) jokes.

### SO WHAT'S SOCAH? WHERE'S ST KITTS?

Some of you, having started this article, may well be saying to yourselves, 'Calypso? Wasn't that "Shame and Scandal in the Family"?' (those of you who are more *au fait* with Caribbean music may well have heard of Lord Kitchener, but how many are familiar with names of today's leading calypsonians: The Mighty Sparrow, The Mighty Shadow, Calypso Rose, Singing Francine, and Blue Boy himself?) You may also be asking, 'So what's socah?' and 'Where the hell is St Kitts?'

St Kitts is a small island in the eastern Caribbean, comprising 65 square miles. It is one half of the state of St Kitts Nevis; the total population of the two islands is 48,000, and it was once named St Kitts Nevis Anguilla (the latter island was the scene of Harold Wilson's ill-fated attempt at gunboat diplomacy in the '60s), but Anguilla has now reverted to the status of Crown Colony, while St Kitts Nevis remains an 'Associated State of Britain'. Full independence lurks somewhere on the horizon, but the breaking of the old colonial ties are more eagerly awaited by Thatcher's Government, yearning to rid themselves of old responsibilities, than by the average Kittian or Nevisian. In fact, they are surprisingly loyal to the British Crown. Imagine my horror when, on my first day at work at the public library, I found the walls plastered with pics of members of the British Royal Family.

The economy is based almost solely on sugar cane production, (nationalised in the '70s), and just to remind us of how we are all part of the same world economic order, the recent closure of Tate and Lyle's refinery on Merseyside threatened to have dangerous repercussions in the Caribbean. Sugar production once played a large role in building up Britain's wealth back in the days of the Glorious Empire, but it's not the money spinner it once was, and the area is now heavily dependent on foreign aid for survival. It's basically a poor country, although culturally and politically it comes very much within the Western Hemisphere.

### CARIB CULTURE

In the past five years the music scene has been positively thriving. The GI's Brass International are the best known and best established of the bands, with a strong following on the island and a reputation throughout the Caribbean for playing 'Hard Music', but there are a number of others who are also very good.

The GI's Brass International were formed in the early '70s. ('GI's' does not stand for American Servicemen, as we might imagine, but for 'Group Impressions', the band's original name.) In 1974 Ellie Matt, a well known Kittian calypsonian, joined the band and they became 'Ellie Matt and the GI's Brass International'. During this period they went from strength to strength, playing calypso, but as time went on incorporating a certain amount of reggae into the repertoire. In 1977/78 socah swept through the eastern caribbean, and the GI's took it up, making it very much their own. I should explain a few things about socah. It is derived from calypso, and has the same relationship to it that reggae has to ska. It's faster and played at a much higher volume than calypso, the brass section playing a very important part.

In recent years, Black American music has had a considerable impact, and socah has been described as a fusion of calypso and funk. It seems to have originated in Trinidad, and spread through the English-speaking islands. On a recent trip to Barbados, my friends there assured me that the pioneer is in fact a Barbadian woman calypsonian called Singing Francine who, when she couldn't find a sympathetic audience at home, exported socah to Trinidad with great success.

The eminence of Kittian music in the eastern Caribbean owes a lot to the pioneering work of the GI's Brass. Tamboura, who plays with De Brass, remembers a time ten years ago when the music scene here was entirely dominated by visiting bands from the other islands. He says that it was De Brass who introduced vocal music: previously bands playing at dances concentrated almost solely on instruments.

This is the 5th successive year that De Brass have played the Trinidad Carnival, one of the most important events in the Caribbean musical calendar, where the competition is fierce. For a band from an island the size of St Kitts to go back year after year is a considerable achievement.

By RACHEL GOLITCH

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Although that Carnival might be the best known outside the Caribbean most of the smaller islands have their own Carnival celebrations, and the GI's will be playing at them. In the summer they will be heading for North America, touring the big cities of the US and Canada and playing wherever there are large West Indian communities.

In 1979, Ellie Matt and the GI's Brass International split. Just who left whom takes some unravelling, but Ellie Matt subsequently formed his own band, Ellie Matt and the GI's Brass, which causes a certain amount of confusion. Both bands have hoards of loyal aficionados, who follow their activities.

At the 1980 St Kitts Carnival (held at Christmas time), both appeared at the 'Queen of the Bands' show (they do not normally share the same billing). This spectacle was in fact formally titled 'Creative Presentation of the Bands', but the 'Queen' label stuck. Essentially, the bands compete for the position of 'Band of the Year', and tradition dictates that they select a 'Queen' (i.e. a young woman who performs with them).

Followers of the two bands were loudly rooting for their heroes, and Ellie Matt and the GI's Brass swept into first place with an awesomely slick and showy performance. When they made their entrance, clad in snazzy red and white, brass instruments gleaming, I felt sure that they would go straight into 'In the Mood', but I had to make do with the number which celebrated 10 years of Carnival in St Kitts: '10 years, Mass of Class'.

'You see', yelled my friend, 'didn't I tell you Ellie Matt was the Best?'

'You can't beat it, class is class.' I replied diplomatically, trying to work out just what the musical differences between the two bands were supposed to be.

In fact, there are quite clear cut differences. Matt is a great showman, his powerful stage presence tending to dominate the line-up completely. He is very much the 'Captain', doing the arranging and song writing and organizing distribution of any records the band releases.

Ellie Matt enjoyed great personal success at the 1980 Carnival, taking first place as the 1980 'Calypso King' with his song 'The Poor Can Take No More'. Not only is this song extremely catchy, it also provides a commentary on the current world economic crisis:

'By and large in the world today,  
The poor man going down in  
every way.  
In America and Europe, the rich  
man rest in peace,  
The poor man getting real  
squeeze...  
...The poor man got it hard in  
every land,  
The poor can take no more,  
That's the cry from shore to  
shore.'

He goes on to attack the current Arms Race:

'Who tell Russia and America,  
That the poor people ready to  
fight their wars?'

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## socah in St Kitts

The rousing chorus ends on a hopeful note:

'One day we're gonna rise,  
And take the rich by surprise,  
And then for sure, the poor can  
take no more.'

Surely a song which deserves a bit of international exposure, one in the long tradition of politically conscious calypso. Every year, throughout the Caribbean, governments cringe at the barbs directed at them by Calypso singers. It is essentially a poor people's music, as is most popular music in the region.

The Caribbean has the peculiar distinction of being the only area in the world without an indigenous population: the original inhabitants, the Arawaks and Caribs, were completely wiped out by the European settlers. St Kitts was no exception. The inhabitants of Liamuiga, as they called the island, were massacred by that English Gentleman, Sir Thomas Warner at a site called Bloody Point. Only Dominica, whose mountains and forests afforded some protection, has anything like a Carib population today: 3,000 people of Carib descent live there on reservations.

Carib culture, then, is essentially a fusion of many traditions: African, English, French, Spanish, Irish. The old white planter class who once controlled the whole region, gave the Caribbean its economic structure, social classes and political system, but in terms of living culture and expression, their input was minimal. As a class they identified completely with Europe, any item they required, be it music or books, was imported from the metropolitan areas. This is particularly true of the English Plantocracy, many of whom were largely absentee landowners. And if the British ruling class was the most philistine in the world, you can imagine what their colonial offshoots were like, gin and cards dominating their social intercourse. The music was born from the experiences of the poorest people, the slaves, later to become the agricultural proletariat. Calypso itself was born in the plantations, providing the slaves with a commentary on the reality of their daily experiences and is to be found as a musical form throughout the English speaking Caribbean, from Guyana on the South American mainland, to the Leewards in the east.

Jamaica, in the west, by virtue of its size and its geographical proximity to the United States, possesses cultural traditions which are in many ways distinct from those of the smaller islands. Calypso as a form has never really taken root there, although Jamaican Mento music is closely related. In recent years, ska, rock steady, and, most recently, reggae have developed from the experiences of the urban working class.

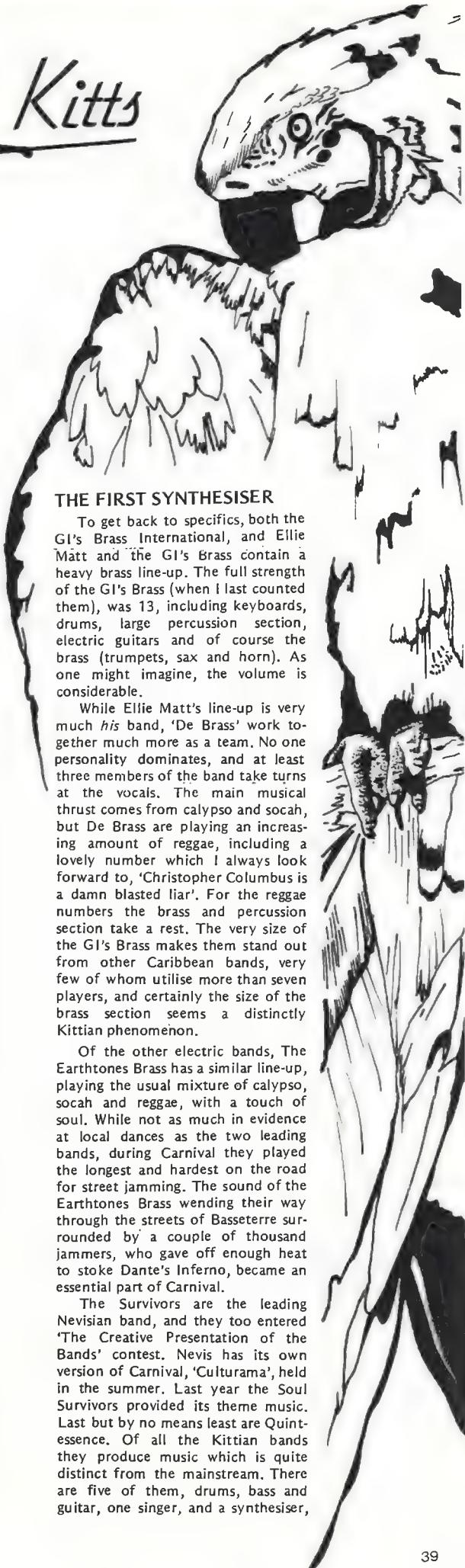
### THE FIRST SYNTHESISER

To get back to specifics, both the GI's Brass International, and Ellie Matt and the GI's Brass contain a heavy brass line-up. The full strength of the GI's Brass (when I last counted them), was 13, including keyboards, drums, large percussion section, electric guitars and of course the brass (trumpets, sax and horn). As one might imagine, the volume is considerable.

While Ellie Matt's line-up is very much *his* band, 'De Brass' work together much more as a team. No one personality dominates, and at least three members of the band take turns at the vocals. The main musical thrust comes from calypso and socah, but De Brass are playing an increasing amount of reggae, including a lovely number which I always look forward to, 'Christopher Columbus is a damn blasted liar'. For the reggae numbers the brass and percussion section take a rest. The very size of the GI's Brass makes them stand out from other Caribbean bands, very few of whom utilise more than seven players, and certainly the size of the brass section seems a distinctly Kittian phenomenon.

Of the other electric bands, The Earthtones Brass has a similar line-up, playing the usual mixture of calypso, socah and reggae, with a touch of soul. While not as much in evidence at local dances as the two leading bands, during Carnival they played the longest and hardest on the road for street jamming. The sound of the Earthtones Brass wending their way through the streets of Basseterre surrounded by a couple of thousand jammers, who gave off enough heat to stoke Dante's Inferno, became an essential part of Carnival.

The Survivors are the leading Nevisian band, and they too entered 'The Creative Presentation of the Bands' contest. Nevis has its own version of Carnival, 'Culturama', held in the summer. Last year the Soul Survivors provided its theme music. Last but by no means least are Quintessence. Of all the Kittian bands they produce music which is quite distinct from the mainstream. There are five of them, drums, bass and guitar, one singer, and a synthesiser,



(St Kitts' one and only). Their repertoire is cool and sophisticated: soul, disco, reggae, soca, rock; you name it, they can play it. A visitor commented that they wouldn't be out of place in a Californian night club, and it's possible that they're more popular with visitors than with the locals. From my own point of view, while not wishing to denigrate the other bands, it is refreshing sometimes to listen to music without being blasted by trumpets. Quintessence came third at the 'Creative Presentation of the Bands' show, (The GI's Brass came second), but a number of spectators thought that they deserved 1st place. 'Politics make it', someone muttered, 'Ellie Matt and De Brass just had to come first and second.'

Considering that this entertainment is known as the 'Queen of the Bands Show', Quintessence surprised me by providing an entertainment that was completely non-sexist. Michelle Brooks was billed, not as a 'Queen', but as a member of the band. They provided us with a musical history of St Kitts, including a pisstake of the whole institution of that uniquely West Indian phenomenon, 'The Queen Show'. For most of the audience, it was their first opportunity to hear the synthesiser, appreciative cries of 'Cooh' and 'Ah', greeted the trills of bird song, and the sound of lapping waves flowing from this instrument.

There are a number of other electric bands coming up in St Kitts—many of them with very young members. I'd like to pay more attention to them, but space does not permit: it will be interesting to see what kind of music develops from them.

#### STRING, STEEL AND BRASS

When I started writing this piece, I tried to do a bit of research into the musical influences at work in St Kitts. 'Ah', I thought, 'maybe the big brass line-up has its roots in the Big Band Sound of earlier years'. But it seems not. There is an older musician on the island, George Butler, who plays the most beautiful jazz saxophone, and in his younger days toured with jazz orchestras, but no one remembers jazz bands being very popular. But there are two brass bands on the island, the bands of the Defence Force, and the Police Force respectively. Membership is open to young people, and while they are not quite Grimethorpe Colliery standard, they do play Brass Band music at public events, like Remembrance Day parades. Many of the musicians in the electric bands got their first chance to play in one of these two outfits.

As for influences from outside the Caribbean, black American music is extremely popular whereas white rock music, whether of the European or American variety has little impact. The death of John Lennon was greeted with little interest by the local radio station, ZIZ, though the French stations, broadcasting from Martinique and Guadeloupe, played nothing but Lennon songs for several days (but then, the French islands tend to see themselves as part of Europe anyway, independence movement apart). However, musicians, in their late twenties/early thirties, re-



member clearly the impact that the advent of the Beatles had on music in the area.

No one, but no one, has any interest in the current state of British popular music. Apart that is, from those who listen to Steel Pulse and Joan Armatrading (St Kitts' most famous export). Recently Disco has made its presence felt, as in the rest of the world. We now have two discos in Basseterre and a number dotted around the island. At the weekend they are full of sweet young things of both sexes (and some not so young), dressed in the height of International Fashion, dancing to the latest disco sounds. Abba, who have me fleeing for a breath of fresh air from any disco venue, are greatly enjoyed by the locals: it really is a one-world system. At Christmas time I saw the ultimately bizarre spectacle: a man dancing on nails and glass (traditional folk art), to DISCO!

Briefly, I must mention the traditional music of Steel bands which started in Trinidad and spread throughout the islands. There are several in St Kitts, notably the Maple Leaf Steel Orchestra, and The Coca Cola Coronets, who were much in evidence at Carnival and are often to

be heard at the hotels, entertaining the tourists.

The folk music is really the String Band music. Most of them are based in the country areas, although they do make appearances in town from time to time. Nevis, whose economy is based on peasant farming, has a much more settled rural tradition and it is there that the best string bands are to be heard. Whereas in St Kitts it is the electric bands which play at public dances, it is not uncommon to find a string band playing at a dance in Nevis. They use home-made instruments—banjos, guitars, pipes. I recently saw a band perform whose centrepiece was an amazing box-like instrument which the player sat on and plucked the strings. There was a time when it seemed that the art of banjo making was about to die out, but an elderly banjo maker is now teaching his skills to a group of young people, and the results are currently on sale in Nevis.

String Band music is found in various forms throughout the islands of the Caribbean. On a recent visit to Dominica I heard a 'Jing Ping' band play. They were not unlike a String Band (also known as 'Scratch Bands'), but the piano accordion and the

Creole songs give Jing Ping a distinctively Francophone flavour. From Haiti to Venezuela and throughout the islands in between, one can hear folk music with common cultural roots. Caribbean people have always been a well-travelled, cosmopolitan lot. Long before emigration to England and the US commenced, people were travelling in search of work—to Cuba, to Curacao, to Aruba, to the Dominican Republic. Currently the exodus is to St Martin, St Thomas and St Croix—wherever the tourist dollar beckons. This social mobility gave its own dynamic to cultural change.

At Christmas time I saw my first 'Masquerade' and 'Bull' troops. The Bull troops have close affinities with English mumming troops, going from house to house performing traditional plays such as 'David and Goliath', and their stock characters, the Devil, the Fool, and the Bull, have close affinities with European folk culture. The Masqueraders represent a fusion of many folk traditions, dressed in elaborate, predominantly red costumes, sewn all over with mirrors, with headdresses made of peacock feathers. They perform in the streets to the music of the fife and drum. The partners in the dance are a young man and a younger boy, and I was a little surprised to note how erotic many of the gestures are; friends inform me that this element comes from African fertility dances. The European traditions in this music are clearly not from the plantocracy, but from the Common Soldier (St Kitts—'The Gibraltar of the Caribbean', was an important garrison) and indentured servants who made up the poor white population of the island.

#### HEAR IT FOR YOURSELF

It is possible that some of you would like an opportunity to hear some of the music of St Kitts. This presents a few problems. Both The GI's Brass International and Ellie Matt and the GI's Brass have made a number of recordings which are currently available, but neither band has any relationship with large-scale record companies. Air Studios are based in Montserrat, a short flying time away, but their high technological delights are strictly reserved for international pop stars like Paul McCartney, who has recently been soaking up the Caribbean sunshine. Island bands cannot possibly afford to rent time there, so they go to Puerto Rico to record, at their own expense. The marketing and distribution of the records is also done by the bands themselves. They are thus available to a limited extent in other Caribbean islands, but almost completely inaccessible outside of the region.

Tamboura, of the GI's Brass International, has done some solo recording. He told me recently of a song of his which had topped the regional charts for weeks, but it had only been done on tape. It's possible to hear a number played repeatedly on the radio, but if you want a copy you just have to get the cassette out yourself.

Kittian music, with all its vibrancy and excitement certainly deserves a wider audience.



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Read the papers? Watch Top of the Pops? If you do then you're surely aware of that African beat making its presence felt. Most unusual for popular music—everybody has been candid about their source material; the chunka-chunka-chunka-kachunka-kachunka that has powered Adam and the Ants and BowWowWow is openly stolen from the rhythm of a 1972 single called 'Burundi Black'. White popular music considers theft a divine right so maybe the story should end there but let's just

Tanzania and Congo—is said to be one of the world's poorest states). Some of his recordings were released at the end of the '60s on the OCORA label—then a branch of ORTF (Office de Radiodiffusion Television Française) as 'Musique du Burundi'. The final track on this album was the drum ensemble of Bukirasazi playing in honour of the authorities. The ingoma drums which they played symbolised power; their music was considered by the Rundi as the most representative element of the musical traditions of their country.

Since their vinyl debut (or even before it) the hereditary power of the Bukirasazi drummers has somewhat

What was inevitable? That some-body should re-release the original Barclay single as a 12". And who should do it? Why, DECCA, who have held a large proportion of the African popular music industry by the throat for many years. That is by the same DECCA who were prevented by the Courts from releasing old and previously-rejected Adam and the Ants demos. Additional drums are now provided by New Romantics wonderboy Rusty Egan (as if the Rundis couldn't quite make it by themselves) and composer credits go to somebody called Mike Stephenson.

# that BURUNDI BEAT!

consider the origins of this hardest of rhythms. An exceptionally militant noise (through which entrepreneur Malcolm McLaren moulded BowWowWow; he allegedly sold the 'concept' to Adam Ant) appeared on Barclay (France's monopoly record company) as a flip side. The plug side was pre-Euro disco banal; a 'com-poser' had added a few pathetic electric noises to the drumming for the sake of popular recognition. Where had this drumming come from?

Barclay was the French label which tangled with McLaren for the privilege of releasing Sex Pistols records in France (could the ethnic-glam cult have been hatching even in those heady days of punk revolution?). France was the connection which made it possible to purloin the base material. In 1967 Michel Vuylsteke recorded a selection of traditional music from Burundi (the Republic of Burundi—an ex-French colony sandwiched between Rwanda,

departed their control; the first 'official' bootlegging was the aforementioned Barclay single. Following that came their unconscious participation in Joni Mitchell's 1975 'Hissing of Summer Lawns' album on a track called 'The Jungle Line' (don't bother checking it out—it stinks). From there they were licensed to the Italian label Albatross; released on a new OCORA series independent from ORTF. In 1980 they fuelled the new teeny-bop fashion phenomenon which was taken to the top of the sales charts by the 2-drummer-Gary-Glitter-meets-Burundi sound of Adam and the Ants.

So who got the money? Stephenson obviously gets his share. Adam paid McLaren for the idea but gets his composer credits for the Ants records. Don't feel too sorry for McLaren because he's getting his share of the BowWowWow writing credits. OCORA tend to favour outright purchase deals for tapes (this ethnic stuff is minority music; it doesn't sell; nobody's interested; take the cash) so who does that leave?

Oh, yes! The ultimate 'wild nobility'—the Bukirasazi drummers themselves—living in one of the world's poorest states. Royalties? Well, at least they're famous now, aren't they?

by

david toop



LIGHT FINGERS  
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# TURNTABLE CHOICES

DISC PICKS FOR THE LATE SUMMER BY THE EDITORS

# ADVENTURES of STEEL

1. Off the Coast of Me Kid Creole and the Coconuts (and everything else he does) ILPS 7012
2. Supergroups of the 50s Platters, Crewcuts, Diamonds, Gaylords, etc. Pickwick SPC 3271
3. Traditional Women's Music in Ghana recorded by Verna Gillis. Ethnic Folkways 4257
4. Celia Cruz anything I can get my hands on but especially La Incomparable Celia SCLP 9136
5. That's the Joint Funky 4 plus 1. Sugarhill SH-554 12"
6. Kingston Harbour off Jump with Me by LPR (steelband disco) OLP 009
7. Rags Lindsay Cooper (soundtrack to The Song of the Shirt) Arc Records RRF 001
8. Roberto Who . . . ? Cayenne (salsa jazz) Groove Records GPLP 30

Sue Steward

1. Dynamite Verckys and l'Orchestra Veve African V1360-0165
2. Night Music Bela Bartok
3. Midwoud Han Bennink and Misha Mengelberg ICP 13
4. Birds of South East Europe Eterna 8 21 611
5. E.S.G. 12" EP
6. Francosyrian Girl (Greek rembetika) Marcos Vamvakaris. Olympic MC 35053
7. Latin Roots Cariño DBM 1-5810
8. Music for the Ch'in Museum Collection, W. Berlin MC 7 Peter Cusack

SOME OLD; SOME NEW; SOME BLUE

# on the WHEELS

1. Danzon Mambo Acaño y sus Maravillas (with Jesus Lopez—a wonderful piano player) Cariño D BMI-5806
2. I Wonder The Crystals. London (GB) HLU-9852
3. Die Drei Groschen Oper Brecht and Weill (with Lotte Lenya, recorded in 1930) Eterna 8-20-440
4. The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel Grandmaster Flash. Sugarhill SH-557
5. Musik der Hamar (from South Ethiopia) Museum Collection, W. Berlin. MC6
6. Pool John Zorn. Parachute POO-11/12
7. E.S.G. 99 12" EP. 99-04EP/FAC 34
8. Entracte/Musique d'Ameublement Erik Satie. Erato STU-71336

Steve Beresford

1. In Our Lifetime Marvin Gaye. Motown 542001
2. E.S.G. 12" EP
3. Super Star Verse 2 Sir Shina Adewale and his Super Stars International (juju—Nigerian electric guitars + trad. percussion—at its oddest and best) Wel Kadeb Records WKLP 2
4. Shri Camel Terry Riley. CBS M35164
5. Solo Wilkie Colon (deliriously over-produced Nueva Yorican salsa meets funk meets latin roots) Fania LPS 99-108
6. Inuit Throat and Harp Songs (Eskimo women's music from Povungnituk) Canadian Music Heritage Collection MH001
7. Typical Girls Slits bootleg live in Cincinnati and San Francisco. Basic 2
8. The Bottom Line O.V. Wright (his death this year went virtually unnoticed. Everything he recorded was good—a lot of it great) HI HLP6008

David Toop

# my radio sure sounds good to me

A supplement to DISTANT VOICES compiled by  
IAN HOARE

Station	Wavelengths (MHz) <sup>1</sup>	Transmission times (GMT)
Voice of Iran (English) (Persian)	9022 15084, 9770, 9720, 9022	1930-2030 2030-0230
Radio Tirana (English)	9500, 7080 9480, 7065 9480, 7065 7065, 1395 KHz (MW)	0630-0700 1630-1700 1830-1900 2030-2100
Voice of Vietnam (English)	11840, 10040 11840, 10040	1800-1900 2030-2130
Radio Havana (English)*	11920 7135†	2010-2140 2200-2300

<sup>1</sup>Except where stated

\* Times and frequencies may change during March.

† From transmitters in the USSR.

Note: Best source for further information is probably *The World Radio & TV Handbook*. The BBC World Service used to run a programme about listening to foreign radio stations on short wave, called 'World Radio Club'. It included information on new stations and technical developments, but this was taken off the air late last year and won't be brought back unless the programme planners get an enormous number of complaints. Its place has been taken by a brief programme called 'Waveguide', which is concerned only with listening to World Service but includes some general information about how to listen to short wave. You can hear this on Thursdays at 1709GMT and Fridays at 2155 GMT, on 648 KHz/463m. Adjust throughout for British Summer Time.

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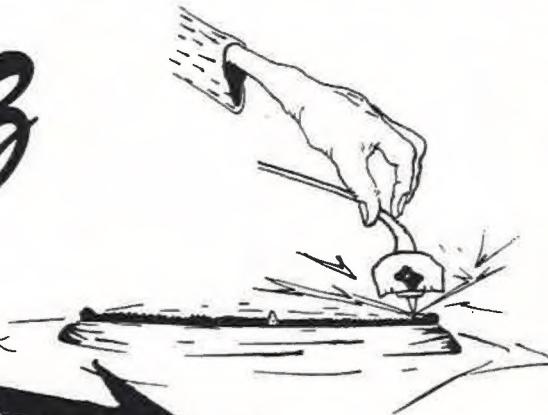
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